The Vanguard

Edgar Beecher Bronson

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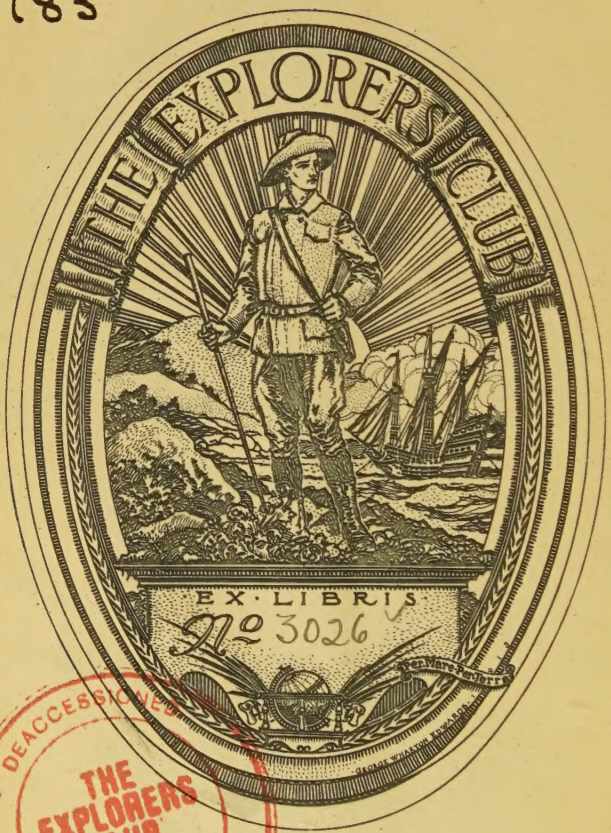

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E. P. Bronson -

THE VANGUARD

Inscribed by the author
for
The Explorers Club

E. B. Bronson.

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The Vanguard

BY

EDGAR BEECHER BRONSON
Author of "Reminiscences of a Ranchman,"
"The Red-Blooded," etc.

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DEDICATED

TO THE PATHFINDERS AND THE PACIFIERS
OF THE PLAINS AND THE SIERRAS.

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THE VANGUARD

The Vanguard

—I—

BAPTISED INTO BATTLE

I BELIEVE it was Victor Hugo who once wrote, "A judge is more and less than a man; he is more than a man because he holds the scales of justice; he is less than a man because he has no heart."

But my memory harks back across a half century to times when judges, and prosecuting attorneys and peace officers as well, were less than men for other reasons than a lack of heart; not all, of course, but far too many.

I refer to times in the formative epoch of our early mining communities, from the British line to the Mexican border, when their lawless elements made the lives and property of honest, serious folk who there ventured as insecure as both had been while exposed to the ambushes and raids of hostile Indians who infested the overland trails; to times when judges and peace officers were either the willing and well-paid tools or the cowed and trembling servitors of the human vul-

tures who there preyed and fattened; to times when vigilance committees were more often instruments of private grudge and abettors of crime than just punishers of wrong-doers.

Bitter, cruel times were those that tried one's faith alike in justice human and divine, times when a man with the rashness or deliberate hardihood to defend the weak often found himself forced without the pale of whatever crude counterfeit of law happened at the moment to be prevailing, his only chance of escape of a corrupt verdict — certain to cost him his life or liberty — lying in a fighting flight that stamped upon him indelibly the stain of outlawry.

Looking down now from the serene height of the seventy-four years I have now attained and back over forty-odd years of perpetual battling, I marvel most that I should still remain alive to tell of them. Most of my contemporaries, actively engaged in the same employment that has been my principal life-work, have long since crossed the last divide, dying manfully, like the sturdy battlers they were, with their boots on. The few that remain I could count on the fingers of one hand.

While I will not live to see it, and while it is perhaps too much to hope, I trust one day some faithful hand will chronicle the honour-roll of that vanguard of unlettered and unsung heroes, who as stage-coach messengers, treasure guards and marshals, to their end fearlessly fought, often single-handed, the raiding hostile savages, the or-

ganised bands of road agents that infested the stage roads, and the disorganised groups of thugs and hold-ups that thronged new mining and front railway camps.

These hardy, rude but none the less Homeric husbandmen daily staked their lives, until ultimately they lost them, in a death-grip battle with all the various species of noxious social weeds that, so long as they flourished, remained a constant threat to and charge upon every form of peaceful industry and commerce.

These men were the real pacifiers of the early trails and towns, a class without which, had men of like kidney been lacking, the pacification and settlement of the plains and sierras would have been retarded another half century.

To be sure the memories of many are gone past finding as completely as their wolf-picked bones have disintegrated and become absorbed into the plant life risen above the buffalo wallows in which they died; are lost as hopelessly as every trace of many a "Boot Hill" that held their unmarked graves has been buried for all time beneath masses of brick and mortar; but the life stories of enough of these men are still obtainable to enable just measure of their services and worth.

Mine has, unfortunately, been a red record from early youth right up to the very end of my active career. Some of its leading incidents I now propose to chronicle, incidents that will serve to point to the youth of to-day the hardships and dangers an earlier generation had to cope with,

in battling, first, to save our Federal Union, and, later, to win from savagery hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory now teeming with peaceful industry and trade.

And while for the larger part of forty years I have been reckoned as an outlaw in one part of the country or another; and while enough men have met death at my hands — many more, indeed, than I shall here take space to mention — to start a fair sized graveyard, my story I shall tell alike without shame and without pride or spirit of boast.

I shall tell it without shame, for I never killed any but savages and desperate criminals engaged at the time of their taking off either in trying to kill me or to capture property I was employed in guarding — I got there first, that was all; without pride or boast, because no really brave man harbours such sentiments.

And whatever is a "really brave man," I wonder? Certainly there must be degrees of bravery, if some, as we are told, are utterly devoid of fear. For while I hope and believe I never funked going against any odds where my bounden duty required, I know I always dodged trouble as long as I could with decency and safety, and never myself became really dangerous to another until I myself had become badly scared.

All so called danger, anyway, is only relative; is actually appalling only to the inexperienced; invariably diminishes where circumstances over which we have no control make us its familiar,

until, while ever sensible of the hazards it hangs over us, and always sub-consciously on guard for them, we eat and sleep with it as consciously unconcerned about our own physical safety as is a village sexton spading God's Acre.

A crisis come, then I believe even the hardiest suffers a momentary access of fear that sends the blood surging back upon the heart, a mental shock due to the surprise. But this is instantly followed by a hyper-natural alertness of every sense in personal defence against the threat impending.

Thus the steeple-jack swings singing at dizzy heights; the miner jests while he tamps his blasting charge and lays his fuse; the trained gunfighter chaffs and apparently lounges beside an enemy he knows is eagerly watching for a chance to pot him.

And, if you ask me, none of these men are running materially more serious risk of their lives than do the denizens of cities, dodging darting throngs of automobiles with all the cleverness and coolness of a *banderillero* in a bull ring; are in no more peril than the workers among the madly whirling wheels of many a factory. So, at least, it seems to me.

I come of a race of pioneers. Indeed, I myself was born in a sugar bush of Ionia County, near the centre of the State of Michigan, under conditions of life so bitterly hard that the worst that has befallen me away from the home of my boyhood has seemed, by comparison, easy.

There in the early forties it was a perpetual struggle from year end to year end, with no reward at the finish other than the keeping ourselves scantily clad and seldom better than half fed. None escaped the struggle. Toddling youth and halting, palsied age had to work to live, knew no ease or even real rest.

Of money there was practically none there in circulation, and of this condition I recall a striking instance. Mr. A. S. Wadsworth was the grandee of our community, its leading merchant and the owner of the only water power sawmill in that section.

Always a large creditor of the neighbours for lumber and supplies, the only payments any were able to make to him were in produce. Thus when, one day, the postmaster, Mr. Hooker, received a letter for Mr. Wadsworth upon which twenty-five cents was due, a canvass of every cabin in the county failed of finding a single coin.

For Mr. Wadsworth it was a serious dilemma. He knew the letter was to him an important business communication. He must have it. But how get it? For some days he puzzled and worried over the problem, until at last came along a rude financier, Jake Bowman by name, with a solution. He offered to take his pack of hounds and go with Wadsworth on a coon hunt!

Through the cornfields and woods the pair prowled for three days with the dogs, without success. But on the fourth day they scored — with five fine coon pelts!

Wadsworth " pegged out " the hides for a few days until they were properly dried, then he walked ninety miles through the wilderness to Detroit, which was a small French trading post in those days, where he found a market for his five pelts.

They brought him sixty-seven cents, and their conversion into coin had cost him a round trip of one hundred and eighty miles. Nevertheless, he was able to return with the funds needed to get his letter.

Of boyhood I had none, of the careless, rollicky, happy sort that goes to make up the dearest treasured memories of most men; no schools, no play, little of even the rudest comforts, often actually ahunger. Dreary, wretched days were those, and horrid were the nights; no light but the flicker of the fireplace, and that dulled, almost obscured, by the cloud of anxiety and care that ever shrouded our little cabin in oppressive gloom and dulled faces into impassive, brooding masks.

Eight years I there worked as boy and youth, four years at twenty-five cents per day, four at fifty cents per day — eight years virtually for nothing — slaving in the logging camps, doing a man's work by day and all the camp chores by night. Still it was a life that turned out steel-thewed stalwarts, and it was for that, and that alone, I feel indebted to Michigan.

And yet, perhaps, I should not make my indictment of the State in general and of old Ionia County in particular so sweeping, for there to be

sure, living only two miles above us in the sugar bush, was Bessie McVicker, the only ever-happy, merry-faced, mischievous lass in all that forest side. Blue eyed was she, ruddy as a cranberry, lithe as a panther, with such thick masses of blond hair cloaking her shoulders she never on the coldest day seemed to mind the thinness of her rent and threadbare frocks.

She was about my own age. From my first glimpse of her, it was a joy to me to see her face; her smiling mouth and devilment-lighted eyes shone among the grim, brooding, gloomy faces of the neighbourhood like a burst of sun rays through a darkly ominous pall of cloud.

Seldom it was we met — lacking schools and churches, lacking indeed leisure for social gatherings of any sort of either the old or the young. Occasionally I met her on her way to the Saranac store or on some forest path, always to my discomfiture, notwithstanding the happiness it gave me to see her. For it was never a kind word she gave me; always, instead, a raw jest or jeer at my dress or awkwardness.

Indifferently as she treated me, almost cruelly, in fact, I suspect I was near to madly loving Bessie McVicker until one day I surprised her hanging for half an hour intent, eager eyed, herself silent, on the yarns of young Tom Harper, a handsome but evil-natured and drunken young lumberman who was telling her of the wonders of the growing settlements and of his adventures on his last log drive.

The half hour I watched them, through the sheltering leaves I hid behind, filled me with such jealousy and bitterness as to leave me ill prepared for her disdain of me at our next meeting, when she bounded out of the bush into a camp where I was at work "sugaring off," boiling maple sap into sugar.

Near beside the fire and kettles we had a great trough filled to the brim with sap, and down upon the edge of this trough sat Miss Bessie, leaned across it, bracing herself with one hand resting upon its farther side.

She screamed with laughter when an unlucky slip in the slush sent me sprawling and plunged my finger tips momentarily among the live coals of the fire.

This was bad enough; but when, only a moment later, by some evil chance, Tom Harper happened into the camp just as Bessie had resumed jeering me, and began showering me with icy sap, tossed out of one of our wooden ladles, "to save the lubber from burning up of his next tumble into the fire," as she laughed to Tom, it was too much for me.

Suddenly swept by a great wave of resentment, I jolted free of its grip on the trough the hand that balanced Bessie above the icy sap, when plump into it she fell, soused thoroughly from head to foot.

And scarcely out of it had she started to scramble before Tom, of a third greater weight than mine, had caught me a smash in the ear that drove

me flying clean across the top of the trough, where for an instant I lay half stunned. But by the time he got to me, great fist swinging for another blow, I was on my feet with a stick of fire wood in my hand.

Luckily for me, my stick landed a fraction of a second ahead of Tom's fist, landed high up across the bridge of his nose, and of the blow Tom dropped limply into the snow, just like I have seen many a man sink in a shuddering huddle of a brain shot.

And, God! the tide of remorse that then swept me! For it seemed to me I had taken a human life. Bessie, shivering of her drench in the sap, dropped beside Tom, taking his head in her lap, and began wiping his bloody face with her sopping sleeve. Then, like a flash, all remorse vanished.

Meantime Tom lay still, scarcely breathing, so still I got scared and slipped out of the little clearing into the big forest, through which I hurdled at my top speed until I reached home.

Breathlessly I told my old dad the story — and then received at his hands a harder pummelling than I have ever received since, for my rashness.

Slight as at best were the ties that held me to home, it really needed less than this incident to break them.

Thus, haunted with fear that Tom might not recover, and smarting of what I then regarded, and still regard, as an unjust punishment, as soon

as my dad strolled out into the cow lot, I hastily slipped into my best clothes, tucked safely away the one ten-dollar bill that represented the gross accumulations of eight years of hard labour, and stole out into the forest, headed west.

A fugitive? Yes; no less than that was I. But, mind you well, I knew Tom — knew that with his greater weight and strength and brutal habit, he was certain to kill or cripple me. Otherwise I should not have resorted to a weapon, the first I then had ever used.

Nor pleasant part did I find that of fugitive, then, although later it became natural to me as the most every-day routine of life.

But never till the last taps are beaten for Corporal Stocking will he forget the horrors of that long, weary tramp — south around the lower end of Lake Michigan, north to and through Chicago; west, ever west, across the States of Illinois and Missouri to far away St. Joe; the haunting dread of pursuit that made him shift to cover at every sound of beating hoofs; the ghastly spectre of that still, bleeding face ever peering into his from ambush within some swaying shadow of his campfire; and then the hateful thought, worst torture of all, that the brute might live to win and wed Miss Bessie!

Indeed, never until the Missouri's yellow flood rolled between me and what I had left lying beside the sap-trough did I begin to know any peace of mind.

It was many a year before I heard aught of the

consequences of my baptism into battle in the sugar bush. And soon things so new, strange and stirring were happening to me or about me, that gradually, slowly, just like a few months later I saw Laramie Peak fade to its nightly rest among the shadows that chased away the after-glow, so faded from my memory the incidents of my Michigan forest life — all save that of the roguish face of Bessie McVicker.

St. Joe was then the principal port of departure from the Missouri River of the overland California traffic, a teeming, hustling, hard-cursing and harder drinking little city, straggling along the river bluffs.

A city that seemed never to sleep, its muddy streets thronged thickly of nights as by day with bronzed and buckskinned trappers and traders from the farther tributaries of the great river above Fort Benton; red sashed and silver-bespangled Mexicans from Santa Fé and Chihuahua; grimy, savage bull-whackers and mule skinners out of the overland freight teams; dandy gamblers redolent of scents but ever keen for dollars, habited in sombre black, coats preferably frock of cut, and beringed and bediamonded, and bedamned by all who stacked up stakes against their play; gaily dressed stage drivers, proud of their calling as the captain of a battle-ship of his first command, who, from lofty perch on box seats, looked down upon passengers in general and the world at large with all the haughty contempt of a high roller for a piker — a polyglot lot from

whom one heard almost as much Spanish and French as English.

Up and down the Missouri's muddy flood fussy little stern-wheelers were ever churning; pelts of beasts their down-current cargo, barrels, bales and boxes of food-stuffs and merchandise the loads up-stream.

From dawn to dark stores and warehouses were hedged thick about with close-crowding mule and bull teams, loading or waiting their turn, preparing for the plod away out to the Mormon settlements, or to one or another of the isolated mining camps.

On the streets, at the bars about the gambling tables, all the talk heard was of one generic topic — *adventure,* somewhere, of some sort, shooting scrapes over disputed mining claims, scraps with Indians, hold-ups of stages, pursuits of outlaws, tussles with grizzlies, battles with broncos, skirmishes with Mexicans — naturally enough, for the men there assembled were leading lives that developed no other types of incident to talk about.

In truth it was a period of the daring and the enduring. One incident I there heard told, a happening of a few years earlier, in 1851, particularly impressed me. It was that of the famous ride of G. H. Aubrey, the Santa Fe trader, from the plaza of Santa Fe to Independence, Missouri, undertaken on a wager of one thousand dollars that he could cover the distance, roughly eight hundred miles, within six days.

Aubrey was then a short, sturdily built man of

thirty-eight, absolutely in his prime. Already for ten years a trader over the Santa Fe trail, he knew every foot of it. Ahead of him he sent either six or eight horses, I cannot remember which, to be stationed at convenient points, as relays.

Out of Santa Fe he one morning trotted easily until his mount was well warmed to its work, and then let him out into a long, free lope he never broke, except for brief breathing spells, until the next station was reached.

And these tactics the man had the marvellous nerve and strength to continue until he finally fell fainting from his staggering horse in the public square of Independence — out *five days and nineteen hours from Santa Fe.*

Forty-eight hours elapsed before Aubrey recovered consciousness. For most men, it would have remained their long sleep.

This feat was then unanimously regarded by plainsmen as the most remarkable exhibition of strength and endurance on record, and, personally, I have never since heard of any that equals it. This story I heard told by one of the two men who caught Aubrey as he fell from his horse at the finish.

It was very hungry and nearly naked I was when I reached St. Joe. But already I had discovered that hearts were getting bigger and hands more generous the farther west I travelled.

Thus I was not so very greatly surprised when, the very first day, a rough bull-whacker whom I

saw passing stopped me and said, " Kid, 'pears to me you're lookin' terrible holler; come along to camp." Such an invitation from a Michigander of my day would have given me a fatal attack of heart disease.

However, there I was not slow to accept; and for three days, until I finally got a job with another outfit, this kindly man shared his grub and blankets with me; said I " sorta 'minded him of a kid brother he used to have."

My first job on the plains was not a brilliant one, but at it I was happy as a lark. I was hired as a cook for the wagon master's mess of an overland freight outfit bound for Salt Lake. It was owned by a firm of Gentile merchants of that city, but its wagon masters and their assistants were Mormons.

My compensation was nothing to go crazy over, but at the time it sounded good to me. I was to get no salary at all, in fact, but was promised by the wagon master that, upon our arrival in Salt Lake, I should be provided with a new suit of clothes, a horse, saddle and arms that would fit me to join some California-bound emigrant outfit.

Of course I was no ring-tailed, pea-warmer of a fancy cook, and the mess was not long finding it out; but somehow I managed to get along. Goodness knows, the fare was simple enough, and so, consequently, the demands on my skill; making coffee, frying meat, boiling beans and baking bread — that was all.

Bread making, however, was not long getting me into trouble, for what with my other duties and the gusty winds it was always hard to bake it "done" and yet not burn it.

The mule skinners of our outfit were a pretty tough lot, especially when in drink; and usually at the stage stations, twelve to twenty miles apart, the more particularly notable brands of "fighting whisky" were to be had.

The bully of our bunch was a fellow named Edwards. In the first week out before we struck the Platte River, he had most of our party terrorised. Repeatedly the wagon boss had called him down, but always mildly, for he himself, I believe, was afraid of him.

Finally one morning, while harnessing the teams for a start, Edwards took offence at another "skinner," and beat him most cruelly over the head with a six-shooter. Standing over his unconscious victim, he dared any one to interfere; but not even the boss ventured to take him to task. The beaten man we left at the next government hospital, and whether he ever recovered we never heard.

That very same night Edwards told me that if I burned my bread again he would kill me. Myself unarmed and, besides, yet wholly unfamiliar with gun fighting, I took my trouble to my boss, but only to be told that it was up to me to look after myself.

Next morning the storm broke. Breakfast not ready early enough to suit him, Edwards drew his

pistol on me and started to curse me for not hurrying. But before he had three words out I slipped from my belt an oak tent-pin I had planned to use on him, and at the first crack broke the wrist of his pistol hand.

Then in an instant we had it over and under — a desperate fight I should have never won through with had not the boys collared his pistol and the difference in our weight and strength been evened up by the crippling of his hand.

And at that the affair was a tougher tussle than I ever had, for he bit and clawed and kicked like the wild beast he was. Finally I got a twist of his good arm that nearly broke it, and put him at my mercy, which did not get especially active in his behalf until I had him beaten worse than I like to describe and was myself more of a wreck than I like to think about.

But the affair proved well worth while, for thereafter Edwards was tame as a house cat, and none of the rest of the outfit tried to impose on me.

On we plodded week after week up the valley of the Platte, past Julesberg at the junction of the North and South Forks; on up the North Fork past Scotts Bluffs and Chimney Rock; on through Ft. Laramie, up the Sweetwater and over Whisky Gap, not reaching Echo Cañon until near the end of the fourth month out from St. Joe, for our mules were in bad condition when we started.

People who have not enjoyed an intimate ac-

quaintance with mules fancy them dull and stupid. Nothing of the sort. I'll back an old mule against a possum any day for cunning, where there is a chance of dodging work or of evening a score. And it was right there in Echo Cañon I saw a funny instance of this.

There we were met by a number of clerks sent by our owners to enter Salt Lake with us and see that no goods were made away with by men or bosses, dandified, cane-swinging little chaps whose presence we resented.

As we were descending the cañon of a hot day, one of the mules gave out, and fell, apparently hopelessly exhausted, in its harness. Curses, whips and clubs had no stimulating effect on him. Apparently the beast was about to die. So he was unharnessed, pulled out of the swing, and another mule lassoed to take his place.

But when, just as we were about to drive on, leaving the mule dying, as we thought, one of the clerks gave him a hard kick and struck him with a cane. Lo, a resurrection! the moribund mule struck out with both feet and caught the clerk a frightful kick in the stomach that first doubled him up and then left him writhing like a snake with its head shot off.

And then what do you think that gory old wonder of a dead one did? Why, he just bounded to his feet like a two-year-old, and with alternate snorts and whinneys, head turned and looking back at us, went buck-jumping towards our *remouda* — literally laughing at us, if any creature,

human or brute, ever in this world laughed before!

Arriving at last at Salt Lake, all of the outfit were paid off — all except me. Probably because his commitment to furnish me an outfit touched the pockets of himself and his assistants, the wagon boss refused to make good, vowing he had only offered me free passage as the reward of my work. Indeed all I got out of him, by his own consent, was permission to live at his house until I could find work.

And right there in Salt Lake I might have been stranded indefinitely but for the kindness of his wife, who resented my ill treatment at Green's hands, and whose good heart led her to supply me liberally with provisions and clothes, to give me a good saddle and mule out of their own stables, to arm me with a fine cap-and-ball pistol, after which she told me it would be my own fault if I did not win through to California.

Dear Mrs. Green; she was one of the first it was my privilege to know owning a heart and hand ever ready to help the needy and the wronged.

Poor woman! Not long afterward I heard that her place as favourite wife in her Mormon husband's household was supplanted by a younger and more beautiful woman, who lolled in the comparative luxuries her predecessor had laboured for years helping to accumulate.

So one dark night I was thus enabled to slip out of Salt Lake, well mounted and equipped, and

but for my lack of experience in the saddle should have had easy enough going.

But, totally ignorant of how to cover distance and still save my mule's energies, for a hundred miles I believe I broke all records, then dragged wearily through the second day — and camped that night beside my poor mule's dead body!

For most men this situation, afoot in the Nevada desert, would have been a crusher; but for me all life had come so hard that I found no difficulty in contenting myself with the riches that still remained to me — my pistol, saddle, and a fairly generous stock of grub.

So it was that the next sunrise found me merrily hitting the trail, packing my saddle on my shoulder, happy as a king. Nor was it later than evening of the same day before I bumped into a piece of real good luck; I overtook a party of emigrants who had been laid up hunting strayed stock, and who were kind enough to let me throw in with them.

And on I travelled with them along the Humboldt River, and then up the Truckee to the Big Meadows, where I stopped and worked in the hay meadows until I had earned the price of a cayuse pony.

Fairly remounted again, I resumed my journey toward the Pacific, into California, striking north of west by Honey Lake to Red Bluffs, then the head of navigation on the Sacramento River.

Red Bluffs was then a booming, sizzling, crude

understudy for St. Joe, packed with drifting miners and adventurers of all sorts, money plenty, play high or low as one wanted it. Since then I have seen many a hot practical joke, but never to beat one I there saw played.

The largest saloon and gambling house in town was run by old "Pussy" Britt. It was one of the wonders of the river, talked of even down to Frisco. It sported more looking-glasses than I had supposed the whole world held, four billiard-tables and two pool-tables, a dozen "lay-outs," a mixed job lot of faro, monte, stud poker, roulette, chuck-a-luck, *et cetera;* and five side rooms for poker parties.

Of course the bar was at the front, strategically placed to tempt all who entered and mould them to mellow mood and reckless staking at the tables back of it. Day and night old Pussy's place was packed with a mixed bunch of high-rollers and pikers.

A pathetic butt of this gang of rounders was a rather feeble old man who built the fires and did the chores about the place for his food, sleeping behind the bar or wherever else on the floor he could find room to lay his tired old bones.

"The Butler" was his nickname. Seedy of dress, never clean, and always at least half soused, the old fellow was no rum fiend by his own choice, for he avoided drink as much as he could. But the mad rioters about the bar were always forcing drinks upon him.

One cold day The Butler sat dozing by the

stove, his elbows on his knees and his head — upon which rested a new hat some one had given him — lopped down until it nearly touched the stove, when one of the "funny" sports came along with a big pat of butter. Lifting The Butler's hat, he stuffed into its crown the pound or more of butter, and then crowded the hat down tight over its owner's brows.

Quickly melting, yellow streams were soon trickling down his face and beard, to the great joy of all the assembled rounders, who shrieked and howled with laughter until, finally, the victim roused and reeled out of the room.

But that there was one man in the place with a heart in him to sympathise with the old fellow, the crowd was not long learning, to its discomfiture.

Late in the afternoon of that same day, two-thirds sobered, equipped by his newly found friend with the materials and posted as to method, The Butler, bare-headed and very pale (his face whitened with chalk I later suspected), entered the saloon and approached the stove. A crowd was gathered around it, while the bar bristled with boozers and players and on-lookers hedged every table thick about.

Gunpowder then came in two-pound cans, or flasks, and in his hand The Butler carried such a flask.

White as a dead man, holding the flask half hid in his hand, he began to speak as soon as he reached the stove, in the strong steady voice of

a man possessed of a purpose nothing could swerve him from.

"Gentlemen," he said, "time was in the past when I could have bought and sold every last man of you here present. I was myself once prosperous and happy as you are now. But times change; I'm down — have been so longer than I dare try to recall.

"When I was on top, I never tried to put it over the unfortunate; when I could, gentlemen, I tried to help them. But you sports, it seems, are of a different breed, for not content with trying to debauch me into a drunken sot, you are always hunting chances to mortify and hurt me.

"I'm tired, gentlemen — tired past standing it any longer. Right here is where I am going to cash in, and since I'd like to see what the devil has up his sleeve for a bunch like this, and might miss the fun if you dropped in singly, along with me to hell every last man-jack of you goes in the next thirty seconds!"

His speech and manner were so earnest that all in easy reach of his voice were listening to him, although most of the players remained occupied with their games.

But while he had been talking he had been unscrewing the top of his powder flask; and the moment he finished speaking he opened the stove door and tossed over the live coals enough powder to make a flash that startled to alarmed attention the farthest players.

Then, holding the flask up in plain view of all, he rapidly replaced the cap, and tossed the can far back into the deep wood-stove!

Did they move? My God! but they did; broke into a madder stampede than I have since seen wild broncos or steers in; worse than a flight of routed cavalry; all jamming in a cursing, fighting tangle for a chance of exit through doors or windows.

Three duelists were there, famed throughout the State for their cool courage; dozens of gamblers, miners, freighters, rivermen, reckless, desperate fighters all, bare handed or with weapons; but, like all men confronting a wholly new type of peril, with each it was "the devil take the hindmost!"

Of course all got out, ultimately, torn and bleeding but glad to be still alive.

But behind them they left ruin a cyclone could hardly have surpassed; bar, tables, doors and sashes were kindling-wood.

The Butler and the stove alone remained unscathed!

— II —

THE TALAMA FIESTA

RED BLUFFS did not hold me long. Of river boating, prospecting and mining, and of cattle ranching, I was totally ignorant. Moreover the heavy tide of emigration that had then for several years been pouring thousands into California by both the Overland and Isthmus routes, the numerous desertions from shops at Frisco and San Diego, and the rapidly increasing flood of Chinese, that, later, was to deluge the west coast, had already made labour abundant.

I was not long in deciding, therefore, that I had best make for the logging camps tributary to the sawmills of the Humboldt Bay port of Eureka.

And it was with no small misgivings that I struck out north from Red Bluffs quite alone, for no road or trail between the mountain camps and the coast was then even measurably safe for travellers.

Joaquin Marrietta, "Three Finger Jack," and Tom Bell preyed as ruthlessly upon the poorest emigrants and prospectors as upon the rich miners and merchants and the fat mail pouches and treas-

ure boxes of the stages. From the fine-meshed net of violence and crime with which they dragged the western slope from Shasta south to San Gorgonio Pass, there was no more chance of escape for a shrimp than for a tuna.

To be sure, it was little enough I had to tempt even the greediest plunderer of them all. Nothing, indeed, but my poor little cayuse, the wreck of a saddle and my already well-loved pistol; but it was my all, and to lose these would leave me poor indeed.

Thus it was with every sense alert, keen as a mousing cat, that I trotted north along the stage road, my hand on my pistol while threading thickets, slipping gingerly around turns in the road.

Nor was I long running into trouble. And the oddest thing of all is that when trouble of any sort first breaks about me I have always felt "scared half to death," possessed by an almost over-mastering inclination to run from it, and yet in the next breath could never get my own consent to keep from butting straight into it.

Funny! I never could understand it myself. And yet, come to think of it, not so funny after all, for it was the wild lust of battling that with me was always crowding close on the heels of all my biggest scares that plunged me into all my most serious difficulties.

But one thing I can truthfully say; few of the rows I have been in have come of any personal grievance of my own, or of first aggression by me; usually they have resulted from my interference

when I have found others getting the worst of it.

And since I was still a stranger to gun fighting, it was a devil of a big scare I got early my third morning out of Red Bluffs, when suddenly I heard a heavy fusillade of shots only a short distance ahead of me. At the moment I was crossing the crest of a high hill, the road walled in by tall timber and occasional patches of dense scrub.

The heavy, dull roar of shotguns was answered by the angry, snappy bark of rifles and pistols. I knew it was a hold-up of some sort, probably of the stage, for I was due to meet the down coach thereabouts.

My first impulse was to ride my cayuse to death getting away from the sound of that firing; but — why, the Lord only knows — what I really did, on another impulse, immediately sequent on the first and wholly without deliberation, was to hide and tie my horse in a bunch of scrub and to begin a swift stalk toward the racket.

An advance of a hundred and fifty yards brought me to the top of the north slope of the hill I was crossing, and in full view of as nervy a single-handed fight as I have seen since, after a lifetime spent at the game.

Later I learned the coach carried, besides the driver, the "messenger," or guard, Billy Dobson, and a deputy sheriff, both on the box with the driver; behind them, a miner and a cattleman; back of them, on the roof of the coach, nine Chinamen; inside, an old negress and five other passengers; and that just as the team was straining up

the last steep ascent, blown and weak of their long pull, suddenly out of the bush rode a man on a black mule, who levelled a shotgun at Dobson and called, "Hands up and keep your seats, and we will not shoot!"

"Shoot and be damned!" was Dobson's answer, and as his lips were framing the words he jerked his cap-and-ball pistol and fired, hitting the hold-up fairly in the centre of the stomach just that small fraction of a second ahead of the hold-up's shot to spell a win. But, his mule whirling at the flash of the messenger's shot, the slugs from the bandit's shotgun entered the coach and killed the old negress.

Instantly five more bandits jumped out of the brush and opened fire on Dobson, and it was a very few seconds later I had the scene in full view.

And it was both a heroic and humorous scene I there beheld. The Chinks were tumbling off the roof of the coach and ducking into cover, screaming like they had lost their pigtails; the cattleman was showing a fancier burst of speed than any of the Chinks, and the high coach door was jammed with a fighting, screeching tangle of the insiders.

The deputy sheriff, too frightened to fight, was struggling with the unarmed driver for shelter within the innermost recesses of the stage boot, while above them stood the grim, cool Dobson, an open, sky-lined target for all his enemies, rapidly emptying his pistol at them. On the ground, beside the off door of the coach, the old miner stood

at bay, his emptied derringer in one hand and a sack of gold-dust in the other, cursing the robbers and daring them to come within his reach.

While obviously the circus was no proper affair of mine, right there I was swept by a great wave of resentment at the unfairness of the fight, the hopelessness of the odds the one man was so bravely battling with — a wave of, well, I suppose we may call it sentiment, which has since swept me into many a like pickle.

And no more had the wave hit me than I went into action — sprang down the hill and dropped one of the robbers with my old cap-and-ball.

A rear attack too much for them, the gang whirled in flight so quickly that my second shot was at a back disappearing in the bush.

"Well, partner," Dobson called down from his perch on the box, "I don't know who the hell you are, and I don't care, but I am mighty glad to have met up with you. If Old Shovel-and-Pan down there had been heeled proper — and, Uncle, you're taking powerful big risks on your health, chasing round with no better shooting-iron than that little toy trick you're packing — we might have stood them off by ourselves — hey, Uncle? But as for this cur here "— looking down at the still grovelling deputy sheriff —" well — Oh, hell!"

And then he deliberately stepped squarely in the middle of the pale and twitching face, and sprang to the ground!

"Didn't git to make a clean-up on our slice-

boxes, anyhow — did they?" grinned the miner. And then we dug the driver out of the boot and began straightening out the team.

It took us a good half-hour rounding up the passengers, shouting until we hardly had another yell left in us, and three of the Chinks never did show up. Reckon they are running yet, somewhere in lower Chile.

Three days later an up-road driver told me the posse made up to take the trail of the bandits found their wounded leader only a few miles from the scene of the attack, his black mule standing beside him like a dog. The man turned out to be no other than Tom Bell himself, the first of the big leaders of the worst gangs of road-agents in those parts to have his light put out.

While mortally wounded, his record of crimes was so long and red that the posse hung him where they found him, but not until after he had begged them to write his mother the fact of his death without revealing to her its cause, and received their pledge to hold his true name secret.

That somewhere deep hidden in the man's nature was a kindly strain come of wholesome if not of gentle breeding was pointed in another and most curious way. Bell's black mule showed for him a devotion that at the same time lifted both master and beast above classification as the brutes they were to all except to each other — a devotion the mule could never have conceived except in response to unremitting kindness from his master's hands.

When the posse tried to lead the mule away from his dead master, he fought them, tooth and hoof, until some wanted to shoot him. But the spirit of the beast made one man greedy of him; and on with him they tussled until finally he was overcome.

But no more than half an hour later, when, deceived by an apparently complete surrender, his captor grew careless and loosened his grip on the turns of his *reata* about his saddle-horn, away dashed the mule, galloping down grade and followed by the party. Reaching a stretch of road that was a mere shelf along the edge of a cliff that fell a sheer sixty feet to a slope thickly strewn with boulders, he stopped, stiff-legged, on the brink and stood for an instant looking down.

Then, after gazing back at his pursuers a moment, muzzle raised high and eyes blazing hatred, contempt, defiance, and perhaps — who may venture to dispute it? — a proud joy of the sure escape he had planned, he leaped far out into space!

As the posse sat their panting mounts, gazing in awe down upon the pulpy black blotch that lay quite still among the boulders, a grizzled old mountaineer remarked:

"Fellers, wish't I had a woman that thought as much o' me as that thar mule thought of Tom!"

"Beats hell, don't it?" observed another. "Pow'ful human sort o' thing to do, wa'n't it? Mule just naturally 'lowed it couldn't live none without Tom!"

Pounding along the trail north after that bit of a scrap, and especially after learning that all but the one I downed and the wounded man had escaped, was for me a pretty "scary" job. Of course it was only a guess as to which way the bandits had scattered, and I found it hard to get it out of my head that they were likely to be laying for me, to even things up for my interference in their game.

Thus when, near Shasta a few days later, I heard shouts below me, I was not slow racing into a side ravine and hiding my horse. Then, when I crept back close to the trail and hid behind a log I could see under, it was only a moment before two men, each splendidly mounted and heavily armed, rode up directly in front of me and stopped. One, reining his own horse back on his haunches and at the same time seizing the headstall of his mate's mount, said, "Hold on, Peach!"

"What's the matter?" asked the other; "I don't sense anything that spells *cuidado.*"

"*Caramba* pard," replied the first speaker; "I *smell* a d—d emigrant; don't you?"

That meant me, I knew only too well, for while sure they could not have seen me, nevertheless, miserably ragged and travel-stained as I was after months of hard journeying without means to procure a change of clothing, their highly trained olfactories had marked me down as positively as if they had been hunting me with hounds.

And so, knowing escape to be impossible from

such a pair, I mustered courage enough — and it took a plenty — to step into the open and inquire: "Were you speaking to me?"

When they were recovered from gales of laughter that doubled them over their saddle-horns, the man addressed as Peach remarked: "Cox, I'll sure back your old smeller against Loud's or any other hound's on the coast, trailing bear or humans." And then, turning to me: "Well, son, who in the h—l might you be, and where do you come from?"

Reassured somewhat by their merriment and tones, I replied, "Guess I'm the emigrant you smelled, and I've just come down from the Truckee Meadows."

"So, son?" queried Peach. And then, after a pause, "Cox, the kid looks to me like he has some strips of good tough leather in him; let's adopt him." Adding, to me, "Kid, you *are* foxy; thought you'd hide your horse on us, didn't you? But you've got a few tricks to learn, and I reckon it's up to my partner and me to teach you.

"That spur on your off hind heel is giving you away; step out yonder and bring in your horse, and bank on a straight deal with us. Come along; we'll treat you white, make you a sure enough vaquero and see you don't lose nothing in wages."

Ashamed of my stupidity in having forgotten to remove my one spur, for I had intended to try to dissemble ownership of a horse, for fear the pair would set me afoot, I brought in the little cayuse I had worked so hard to earn, to get from

Cox a "Ho! ho! looks like you have been hitting up the Pah-Utes for a ride, kid. And since that ain't quite our lay, Peach, at least as a business, I vote we pass him up."

Resentful of the charge, I angrily exclaimed: "Damn you, I'm no thief! Here's my bill of sale."

After both had scrutinised the bit of paper, Cox laughingly spoke. "Peach, he'll do, twice — came by his cayuse on the level and has his nice little chunk of temper handy. Must have a plenty, too, for we can't look like none too easy marks for a tenderfoot like him to start in cussing. Fork that cayuse, kid, and let's drift."

And so started an association that meant no end of value to me in respect of training and experience for a lifetime of dealing with the toughest desperadoes the West has produced. It was an association that grew into as close a friendship as can exist with men as desperate and reckless as that pair, and that remained unbroken until I found them drifting into crime. They were so impelled for no reason in the world but for their love of its incident excitement, for each was such a master of horse and cattle craft that honest, profitable employment was never lacking.

Ah! but they were marvels, that pair. Their like, their equal as vaqueros, whether with horses or cattle, I never since have seen. And this is saying a good deal, for at that time the ranch industry of California still remained the chief business of her native sons. At no period of the later

development of ranching, either in Texas or the Northwest, could either section justly boast bronco-busters or experts with the *reata* anything like the equal of the California Mexican vaqueros.

The vast central plain of the State, the intermountain region lying between the Sierra Nevadas and the Coast Range, that since has become the granary of the West Coast, was then a boundless field of wild oats upon which ranged and fattened uncounted thousands of wild cattle and horses. Prior to the discovery of gold at Sutter's mill, no market existed except for the hides of slaughtered cattle, whose meat was left to rot upon the ranges.

Thus neither cattle nor horses were often "worked" (rounded up and handled) as they were, later, after both came into strong demand at good prices. Therefore, they remained as wild and ignorant of restraint as the grizzlies and mountain lion that preyed upon their young.

It naturally followed that, for such little handling as they did have, the very exigencies of the situation produced a class of daring, clever horsemen never excelled in the world's history, habited always in the now well-known gorgeous trappings of the Mexican cowboy.

And then their saddles! If any inanimate handiwork of man ever owned the dignity and grace, any of it, that in creatures animate we recognise as marking a thoroughbred ancestry, a product of generations of careful selective breeding, it is the characteristic California saddle.

No saddle ever made has equalled it, either in beauty or for the safe handling of the most massive bull that ranged the foot-hills behind Visalia. The neck of its horn, or pommel, was as thin and gracefully curved as the neck of a Derby winner; its tall cantel rose high and comfortable as those the Cid and his panoplied knights jousted in. The great leather stirrup housings protected the feet from thorns and storms, and weighted the stirrup for easy recovery when lost by the rider in his mad combats with the wild ones; the sturdy shoulders, broad-spreading beneath its neck, easily bore the stress of the mightiest tugs; the smooth-slipping cinch enabled the easy tightening of one's saddle upon his mount, even when going at top speed. Such were some of the more notable qualities of this king of all saddles!

And then, again, their *reatas,* their forty to sixty foot lariats, plaited of rawhide, dressed until soft as a glove, slender, light of weight, and yet thewed as if with steel. This rope made a weapon so deadly in the hands of a well-mounted expert in its use that he feared the attack of no beast, and of no man armed otherwise than with guns.

Ah, but it was a rare lot of horsemen that life bred!

Wonderful, indeed, were the tourneys when the ranches, from Don Juan Foster's sun-kissed Santa Margarita, nestling among the ice-plants near the Pacific surges that in elder days were ever adding their deep bass notes to the solemn chorus of San

Juan Capistrano's Mission bells, from Santa Margarita up north to the highest cloud-shrouded ranch hidden among the oaks and pines of the foot-hills, poured their silver and gold buttoned and braided champions into one plaza or another — that of Los Angeles, Fresno, Visalia, or of far northern Talama — there to match their craft and skill against all comers.

So, I repeat, it means a lot when I say that my new mates, Peach and Cox, were eminently the best all-round vaqueros I have ever seen. Indeed, in my long experience with them, no wild cayuse or heavy half-breed did we get hold of that either could not easily master. And, what was most unusual, even with the best riders, was that they were as ready to climb a bronco bareback as saddled, and, once fairly on one, never did either get thrown. And that is about the last test of any man's horsemanship.

Peach was a man of massive, powerful build, broad of shoulder, thick of chest, and heavy of thigh and biceps; of medium height, fair haired, blue eyes always alight and alert for a chance of any sort of devilment; a far more than average clever boxer, an all-round athlete who seldom touched a stirrup to mount a horse; an amiable daredevil when sober, a brute as dangerous to friend as to enemy when drunk.

George Cox, while a swarthy wisp of a man, more slender than an Apache runner, lithe almost to emaciation, just a gaunt frame of bone and seasoned sinew, with the sort of narrow-set black

eyes that always begin to glint red fires the moment anything, no matter how trivial, draws their attention — eyes ever on guard against a possible turn of the simplest situation into the worst — was an infinitely more deadly dangerous man than Peach. In spite of that, he was a far more generous, kind, and reliable mate than his partner, even in his cups. Slower than Peach to find cause of quarrel, once roused he was chain lightning in action and utterly relentless.

Cox's one great passion was killing Mexicans. He never missed a chance. In fact, he hunted chances so persistently I always believed he must have suffered some great injury at their hands. Nor did I particularly blame him for this, for never to my knowledge did he kill one that did not deserve it.

But the hatred of the California Mexicans of that time for Americans was not inexcusable. It was no more than the expression of a wholly natural resentment of our intrusion into and disruption of the idyllic pastoral life that clustered about their *placitas* and missions before our conquest of their sunny land.

For that old life had been one of music and of song, wherein the rhythm of the softly thrummed guitars of the night's fandango was still ringing in their ears when the mellow notes of the mission bells called them to the melodious intonations of morning mass.

Cox's best-loved amusement was gambling, and at all sorts of games he owned a skill and refine-

ment of art that suggested graduation under the training of more than one high priest of the temples of chance, an adroitness that kept him flush of cash as often as opportunity for play offered. Peach, also, was an inveterate gambler, but his money was usually such an easy gift to whomsoever he went against that it kept Cox working overtime to keep him staked.

However, wild, unruly and desperately reckless as the pair were, it is only truth to record that when I met them they were engaged in none but honest employment, for their business was that of breaking wild horses on contract, taking their pay in kind, and driving to Stockton or to the mining-camps and there selling their share.

Early in our association they found I was disinclined to engage in the mad, drunken orgies that they invariably plunged into as soon as a newly earned bunch of horses was sold. They also soon realised that they were not my match at any sort of gun play except snap shooting.

From these two conditions it resulted that they soon took me in as a full third partner in their trade of horse breaking, and made me custodian of all our joint funds. And it was precisely that same job of treasurer that proved one of the hardest I ever tried to hold down, the job of all I ever had I should have been gladdest to lose.

For trying to conserve the funds of that pair, by all kinds of strategy to break them loose from their debauches and get them back to work, kept me nearer death's door for longer and more fre-

quent periods than any of the many treasure-guarding jobs that since have come my way.

But always in our open range camps, while busy on our bronco breaking contracts or on the drives of our own horses to market, they were kindness itself to me, and did their best to train me as an expert bronco buster and all-round vaquero.

Indeed I believe it was they who invented the "buck strap" (a narrow strap riveted to the leather housing of the saddle just below and on the off side of the base of the horn) for my benefit, a device later universally used by all riders of the wild buckers except the few past masters to whom "leather pulling," any form of hand hold other than on the bridle reins, was a disgrace.

And while ultimately I became a lot better than an average good rider, even with the help of the "buck strap" I was never near equalling their free-handed saddle work.

Thus employed, many months slipped quickly away, weeks of the hardest kind of battling with the broncos succeeded by a few days in one market town or another. These latter days were one long debauch for my mates, whom I avoided as much as possible except when they were at their worst, when I stayed by to try to restrain them, for I myself never loved a needless broil.

During this period they contrived to pull off something more than half a dozen killings, but always of Mexicans and under circumstances that brought them no serious trouble from the authorities.

The holidays of 1858-1859 found us down in Red Bluffs, strong in cash from the proceeds of a good contract just then finished. There we heard that the great mid-winter *fiesta* was then on in the Mexican cow town of Talama, twelve miles down the river. This fair emptied the ranches for miles around of their lithe, brown lasses, mantillaed or rebozoed, according to their station, and of bespangled, dour-visaged dons and vaqueros, for all of whom this annual *fiesta* was the great event of their lives.

And big event indeed it was, the plaza thronged from dawn until far past midnight with a jostling throng, alight with the brilliant hues of serapes and rebozos, and blazing with the silver and gold decked costumes of the men, where they were gambling, crowding about the bronco-riding contests in the bull-ring, or lined thick along the race-course.

Scattered among these hundreds of native Californians were always a few score Americans, bearded, heavy-booted miners; skin-clad, leather-faced trappers from the Sierras; ranchers, cowboys, and bronco-riders, these latter outgauding even the natives, with bridle-bits and spurs inlaid with silver, sombreros and stirrup-leathers embroidered with silver or gold, pistol-butts set with twenty-dollar gold pieces — every last man-jack of the gringos more or less heavily and gaudily armed. For the bitterest enmity was constantly burning between the natives and the intruders; and while the former were still chiefly armed with only

their traditional *reatas* and knives, their majority was so heavy that the latter would have been up against hopeless odds without their artillery.

Knowing this show was sure to spell trouble of some sort, I tried my best to get my mates to stay away from it, but to no purpose. The best I could do was to win their promise to side-step all drink for that week and to keep away from the *fiesta* until its last day, when its seven days of mixed thrills were to be topped by a battle between a nine-hundred-pound grizzly bear, recently roped and captured in the foot-hills, and a three-year-old bay bull, light and active and famed as the most vicious on the neighbouring ranges.

I am bound to admit that, while fearful of the consequences for all of us going where Peach and Cox would be sure to encounter so many attractive chances for a fresh killing, I was myself mighty keen to see that bear-bull fight.

So the afternoon of the fight the three of us rode into Talama, put up our horses in a feed-corral, bought tickets for the show, and got seats near the ring. The rude benches encircling the ring were packed; the entire populace of Talama and its tributary countryside was there assembled; all came, from the oldest, shrivelled hag to the newest pucker-mouthed baby in arms.

Perhaps as many as twoscore Americans were scattered through the audience, in little groups, none monkeying about much singly.

The afternoon's sport opened with some fine

riding and roping contests, but out of these I succeeded in keeping my mates.

Then at last came the great event of the day — with wild shouts and ki-yis the bear was admitted to the ring from an adjoining pen, his little eyes blazing fury, his shining teeth alternately bared and snapping at the keen-biting *banderillas* (barbed darts) with which the Mexicans had set his massive, grizzled shoulders abristle to rouse his wrath.

A youngster, scarcely matured and yet certainly close to a thousand pounds in weight, his great curved, black claws and ivory fangs were prime, unbroken, and, backed by his vast bulk and supple activity, looked such a terrible menace to any adversary that any unfamiliar with the frightful ferocity of attack of the long-horned champions of the California cattle-ranges would have laid heavy odds on the bear.

But, familiar as all there were with both, the betting odds stood two to one on the bull, with comparatively few takers.

Presently, another gate was opened and into the ring bounded the bear's adversary, head angrily tossing a pair of long horns, straight and sharp-pointed as rapiers. The animal was pale red of back but tawny as a lion of flank, high and broad of shoulders, but lean of flank and light of quarters — a characteristic type of build, I have since learned, that clearly proved his descent from the famous Utreran fighting stock that

for centuries has furnished the bull-rings of Spain their most thralling spectacles.

With raw, savage gladiators like these, strategy was bound to be simple and brief.

Instantly the bull entered, the bear rose on his hind legs and slowly advanced toward him, great claws alternately protruding and disappearing as, with a slight swaying of the shoulders, he suppled his muscles for action.

Meantime the bull was circling the bear at an easy trot, closely eying his antagonist, his shoulders a-quiver of the pain of the ribbon-wrapped darts nodding above them like the plumes of an Indian war-bonnet.

After a turn and a half around the bear the bull backed away until near the outer barrier of the ring, where he stopped, facing the bear, bellowing and filling the air with clouds of dust raised by his angrily pawing hoofs, the act both a threat and a challenge. Perhaps a full minute the two beasts so stood facing each other. Then the bear shook himself, voiced a furious growl, and began a swift advance. This was precisely what the bull had been waiting for, obviously, for scarcely had the bear got under full headway before the bull charged him.

The impact was terrific. As they came together, two great clawed feet for a second ripped and tore the glossy red shoulders, but in the very same instant one long, swordlike horn plunged full length into the bear's chest. The speed of the bull was such that, checked by his terrific thrust,

he turned a complete somersault, and hit the ground on his back with force sufficient, it sounded, to burst him asunder.

But, no; it did not seem even to jar him. In an instant he was up, and once again he thrust the same red-dripping horn deep into the bear's still quivering flank, backed away, as if realising his task was finished, as in truth it was, and then walked slowly round the ring, eyes glinting fury, head tossing proud challenge for a fresh antagonist.

But his triumph was brief. Directly into the ring rode two beautifully mounted vaqueros, and scarcely had he turned upon them when one dropped a rope over his horns, the other snared both his hind feet, and the splendid little battler was stretched helpless upon the ground. Then others entered, mounted, dropped ropes on the stiffening bulk of the vanquished bear, and dragged him from the ring.

The moment the ring was cleared, right there the Mexicans sprung a trick that was new even to my mates. With the help of shoemaker's wax they stuck a twenty-dollar gold piece fast between the bull's horns just above the eyes. Then, when the horsemen had retired and the one footman remaining in the pen had loosened the rope with which the bull's feet had been " hog-tied," and had leaped over the barrier, and the bull had jumped to his feet, madder than ever of the rough handling he had received, those beauties of Mexicans yelled that the twenty dollars was hung up as a

prize for any *gringo* (American) who could take it off the bull without the use of a horse.

What do you think of that? And that little chunk of brute dynamite sizzling for an explosion of wrath that left him no pretty thing for even a well-mounted man to tackle single-handed!

Nobody showed any evidence of appetite for that twenty dollars. Peach and Cox sat silent, awed, as I dare say every one was, by the devilish ingenuity of the Mexicans in planning such a test of our nerve. In fact, neither made any move until, finally, a Mexican ran up in front of the three of us, and cried:

"*You!* You, there; it's *you* the twenty dollars is hung up for. Get it, one of you, if you are not all coyotes!"

It is a miracle George Cox did not kill the speaker; but instead, before Peach or I had so much as contrived to speak, Cox was in the ring. Instantly out flashed my pistol, for I was sure we were in for a finish fight and was scared half to death.

Peach grabbed my wrist and whispered:

"Stow the gun, kid. Leave it to Cox, and watch him make those greasers run rings round themselves."

And then, right there, I sure enough nearly froze stiff, for instead of opening on the Mexicans, as I supposed he would, Cox at once made it apparent that he contemplated the infinitely more nerve-racking stunt of accepting their challenge.

Indeed, the utter recklessness of his deed I did not fully appreciate until, years later, I learned that no Spanish bull-fighter, banderillero or matador, ever ventures near a *standing* bull. They always wait at some distance until, by stamping the ground and waving flag or sword, the bull is incited to charge at full speed; then, and not till then, they advance at a run for the chance to affix a *banderilla* in the bull's shoulder, or deliver a fatal sword-thrust, and effect a safe sidestep.

This for the very good reason that until the beast's great bulk is at full speed no man can count on safely dodging him.

Cox's leap into the ring had attracted the bull's attention, and it turned and faced him, gory head lifted high, motionless, save for an angry switching of the tail. The distance between man and beast was about sixty feet.

For more than a minute Cox stood still, until he had fixed the bull's attention. Then he began a brisk, even-paced walk straight toward the bull, never shifting his steady gaze straight into his face.

The noisy, jeering mob about the pen fell silent. All present must have held their breath; I know I held mine.

Steadily Cox advanced, and still the bull stood as if dazed by the audacity of this puny antagonist. At last, after an age, it seemed, and just as the bull began to paw viciously, the indomitable little man stepped within arm's length, reached out,

plucked the coin from its waxen setting, and began stepping slowly backward!

If not for Cox's own nerve, at least for the nerve-tension the audience was under, there was a limit, a breaking-point. Thus it happened that, while Cox was still within ten feet of the bull, slowly retiring, all of the Americans and not a few of the Mexicans broke into wild shrieks and roars of applause — a racket that seemed to rouse the bull to action.

He charged, sprung like an arrow from its bow!

But quicker yet was the man, for with a lightning-swift draw Cox lodged a bullet fairly in the brute's brain and dropped it at his feet.

— III —

NO GENTLEMAN'S GAME

CHAGRINED by Cox's success in retrieving the twenty-dollar gold piece from its wax setting between the bull's horns at the Talama *fiesta,* the Mexicans were furious, for well they knew none of them would have dared to attempt the feat, much less been able to perform it.

Indeed, no more was the bull down, and Cox turned to rejoin Peach and me, than here, racing across the ring toward him, came a hundred or more Mexicans cursing, yelling the only complaint and demand they could think of — that, having killed the bull, he must return them the coin.

But before they reached him Peach and I were by his side, with our guns drawn, where we were quickly joined by fifteen or twenty Americans keen to see fair play. Then the ring filled with the entire male populace, it seemed, all clamouring for the coin or our lives, many demanding both.

Meantime, Cox stood smiling, silent, apparently delighted with the prospect of a real *matanza,* a wholesale killing. But Peach himself must have felt serious doubts of the result; for instead of courting trouble, as was his usual custom, he told

the mob in fluent Spanish that our mate had accepted their foul challenge, had fairly won a prize none of them would have dared make a try for, and that at the first hostile move we would turn that pen into a shambles.

Strange it was, heavily outnumbered as they had us, but right there that mob "let go," melted, drifted, until our little group and the stiffening carcass of the bull were the only tenants of the pen.

As we were retiring from the ring, one old grizzled miner turned to Cox and remarked, "Pardner, I have drawn cards at death-hugs with Comanches and Apaches, and, once, got my gun broke and had to use my bowie knife to carve my life loose from a grizzly that wanted it. I'm still good for a fifty-mile tramp, on a pinch; but may I be cross-cut and stoped out till I'm plumb holler if I believe these old legs of mine would have carried me over your sixty-foot march on that red hellion. They'd just naturally 've buckled and let me down, ker-plunk."

It was a sentiment which I am sure would have had many cordial subscribers if all who heard it had not still been half breathless of the recent happenings.

When, presently, both the *gringo* and greaser camps had become calmed down a bit, riding and roping contests were resumed which soon proved too much for Peach. In the preceding autumn he had won first prize at the Sacramento fair, both as bronco buster and with the *reata,* and it would

not have been Peach if he could have sat inactive through such an opportunity to humiliate the Mexicans with a display of his superior skill.

Getting his horse, and, uninvited, entering the ring, he roped and tied a wild steer in eighteen seconds less time than any other competitor. Where others, mounted and at top speed, bent from their saddles and picked up from the ground ropes and handkerchiefs, he with equal certainty, picked up small coins; dropped along the off side of his horse until only one hand and a foot were in sight from the nigh side, meantime shooting beneath the horse's neck like a Comanche.

At all this the Mexicans glowered jealously, and nothing but our good luck enabled me to get my mates away from the ring, late in the afternoon, with cool guns.

They told me that through it all I was white as a sheet, and I dare say it was true, for I know I was near sick of fright. Indeed, I took good care not to return to the night's gambling and carousing in the plaza, and for a wonder, succeeded in persuading Peach and Cox to stay in camp with me.

They said I had "done fine" in the jump into the bull ring to meet the mob, but cursed me for a coward for wanting to stay away from the plaza. But for me it was easier to stand their jeers than to take on a new bunch of trouble.

George Peach was in every sense a hard man, one of the most desperate I have ever known. He had an actual passion for fighting. Power-

fully built, always in prime condition on account of his daily gruelling work with wild broncos, wonderfully quick and handy with his fists, he was never once beaten in the eight or ten prize-fights he engaged in during the time I was with him.

That is saying much for him, as in those days the mining camps held as able a lot of ring fighters as could be picked the world over. The hard types that made up the majority of the adventurers who had come there in search of fortune loved the sport, were generous in backing it and reckless gamblers on the results. Such conditions naturally served to attract fistic stars from even the remote antipodes.

While undoubtedly fond of both of us in his way and kindly to Cox and myself when sober, in drink Peach was a raging fiend whom Cox was always most careful to avoid and of whom I was equally cautious, for at that time I could not have stood up against him for a moment.

Thus it fell out that, one evening about our camp-fire, we made a solemn agreement that, under no provocation, should we engage in quarrel among ourselves, much less should either of us strike another; and that if, unfortunately, either should break this engagement, the other two should join in restraining him.

Realising, doubtless, that the suggestion of this agreement, which came from Cox, was inspired chiefly as insurance against his own mad outbreaks, Peach concluded the discussion by insisting upon exacting a promise from both of us that,

in the event he should attempt to strike either, we would promptly shoot him down — little fancying he would soon be earning such self-sought punishment.

But, oddly, scarcely a fortnight had elapsed before, on one of our busiest days, when we were at a mountain camp engaged in marketing a newly broken bunch of horses, Peach got roaring drunk and demanded of me, as the company treasurer, thirty dollars, which I gave him. This did not last him long; the " tin horn " gamblers soon got it, and within an hour he was back in camp demanding of me the hard earned thousand dollars which represented our total cash savings.

In the very instant I refused his demand, he sprang forward to strike me. Powerless otherwise to resist him, mindful of our agreement and certain he would beat me half to death unless I availed myself of its terms, I stood my ground, took his blow and, in the same moment, pulled trigger, sending a ball fairly through his right lung.

And even at that he scarcely got the worst of it. While his wound had him short of wind and laid up in a doctor's care for two months, his blow broke my nose so badly that for weeks the wreck of it clinging to its old stand was hopelessly retired from every sort of business, and for years thereafter it caused me, from time to time, the most acute suffering.

However, blow and shot served a good purpose; for once Peach was up and about again we

were closer friends than before, and never again to the end of our association did a hard word pass between us.

But God knows we were never long out of trouble, of one sort or another, and always serious. Try my best, I could not keep my mates out of it. Cox was actually worse than Peach, for he was as keen for battling when sober as Peach was when drunk. His deadliest animosities, however, were toward Mexicans. He hated the race as a whole in the same whole-hearted way they hated the invading tide of overland American emigration. Thus it was not long after Peach rejoined us that, in a little *placita* embowered among live oaks, a Mexican monte dealer who proved to be quicker at pulling the bottom card from a pack than at drawing his pistol, invited and received death at Cox's hands.

But for once the *paisanos* were too thick for him; although he contrived to wound two more, before he went down, stunned sufficiently to leave it an easy matter for them to tie him and pack him off to the frail *choza* that served as the local jail.

Luckily for him, a woman of the village was sufficiently enamoured of Cox to bring word of his troubles to our camp. Peach was alone there at the moment — I having ridden out to drive in our horses. But a little matter of odds never bothered Peach; in a trice he was mounted and dashing through the town at top speed, throwing lead at every man who ventured to show himself, deluging the place with such a torrent of blue hail

that the guards about the jail ran for cover along with the rest. That left it an easy matter for Peach to release our mate, haul him up behind his own saddle and fetch him safely to our camp. Luckily, I got in with our horses about the same time, when we made a two days' shift at such speed that it carried us beyond their hue and cry.

This change brought us far into the north, close on the then outer line of settlements, where the Digger Indians were fiercely resisting the slowly encroaching miners and ranchmen; or rather, to be more accurately truthful, a few of the more desperate were so engaged, for most of the Diggers were timid folk.

So the third morning of our drift northward, we were not particularly surprised when, on reaching Hat Creek, we found Callahan's ranch sacked and burned, his horses gone, and himself and one hired man stark, abristle with Digger arrows.

Of course we joined a party of neighbours that soon gathered and took the trail, but they proved such a faint-hearted lot we soon left them and struck across toward Eureka, dropping into and climbing out of the fathomless gorges of Roaring Fork and Mad River — both of which, I will stake my word, honestly deserve their names — and followed down Eel River until we came to Hydesville, where (just our luck) we found Captain Wright's little command of Indian fighters.

After looking them over for a day, we decided

they looked like they really meant to kill something besides time, so we threw in with them.

Nor did we regret it. Real men they proved. Wright marched us up into the Great Bald Hill country, about the head of Eel River, where for three months we were kept out stalking the constantly shifting camps of Diggers, sometimes stepping into an ambush and playing pin cushion for their arrows and occasionally having our inning and potting a few.

But it was rarely we could contrive to get in striking distance of them, for they kept scattered like quail and stuck to rugged sierras no horse could travel in. We sure kept them on the run, though, and helped to leave times safe and comfortable for the scattered settlements south of us.

It was not, however, until the spring of 1860, shortly after Wright's command had been disbanded and we had gone to Comptonville, that a blow was delivered to the Diggers that permanently pacified the tribe.

In Humboldt Bay, not far from Eureka, lay Indian Island, which then held one of their largest villages, among whose thickets and the tule swamps they felt safe. But one night a party of twenty-five men, a mixed lot of lumbermen, ranchers and miners, slipped over to the island, surprised their camp and killed two hundred and fifty of them, among the dead being sixty-two children.

It was nothing less than a dastardly massacre, for of even the mature men of the village, few

were active hostiles. As for the children, one man, a ranchman named Larrabe, whose ranch had been burned by the Indians and all of his live stock stolen, boasted that he himself had, single-handed, killed every last one of them; and with the cruel sentiment then prevailing in those parts no voice was raised to protest.

About Comptonville we gathered and broke another herd of horses, luckily for us just in time to sell them handsomely to stampeders for the new placer strike on New River, in Trinity County.

And then on into the new camp the three of us trailed for our share of the pickings — a chance to back Peach for a prize fight or to pull off a horse race, failing in both of which, we could always rely on Cox's skill as a gambler to let us out of a camp heavy winners — when we could contrive to keep Peach away from the gaming tables.

But there we found everybody so crazy staking and prospecting new claims that the trip would have been a barren one but for a chance meeting with Henry Bowen, a youngster who later proved to be the fastest one-hundred-yard runner in California and became known as "The Plough Boy."

Amid temptations which scarcely one man in a thousand resisted, it was always a matter of curiosity to me that neither of my mates fell prey to the mad lust for quick riches inspired alike in white, red and yellow men by rumour of a new gold strike. But they possessed a quaint and primitive philosophy, in which they seemed to be

entirely sincere, and which certainly served to hold them immune.

The subject never came up among us as an urgent proposal but once, early in my association with them. Young and impressionable, a rush of hundreds out of Sacramento to a new strike in the north possessed and nearly swept me with it; but when I proposed it to Peach and Cox, the former answered:

"Not for us, son, not in a thousand years; feller can't get but just so drunk, anyway, and we are makin' about all our systems will hold at this horse game. Then, besides, it don't appear to me to be no gentleman's game to go diggin' with a pick and shovel — hey, Cox?"

"Go 'gopherin,' diggin'?" queried Cox; "why, d—n me, I wouldn't dig my own grave, not even if I knew I'd be needing it *pronto,* and that the coyotes would be chamberin' me if I didn't!" All of which seemed to leave so little room for argument that I made no further attempt to pursue it.

However, while we got none of New River's treasure, the Plough Boy proved to us a good asset, for at Sacramento he won for us a race that tripled our capital. Indeed, I believe we could have dropped down and broke Frisco, but for the fact that Bowen got frightened of the wild carousal our winning started my mates on and slipped away from us.

Throughout the year preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, my mates grew so much more

desperate and reckless that I became convinced it could not be long before one or the other of them would involve us all in some crime, and that, although I was continually straining my influence with them to the breaking point in unceasing efforts to restrain them, I must inevitably be branded as their abettor.

Leave them I realised I must. The war made the opportunity. All of us were keen to enlist, and when they selected the First Cavalry, I chose the Fifth Infantry.

For the last thirty years I have heard little and have not read a line written on the grand work done by the California Column, enlisted in July, 1861, composed largely of miners, bull-whackers, mule-skinners, bronco riders and gamblers, with a sprinkling of lawyers, doctors and merchants from Frisco, Sacramento and the mountain camps.

They made history, did those men who formed the little column that, with the aid of a mixed regiment of Coloradoans and native New Mexicans under Kit Carson, took and held the vast territory west of the Rio Grande for the government. Then for four years, scattered in small detachments over the enormous area between the Pourgatoire River in the north and the Delaware in the south, they were engaged in perpetual battling with the Navajos, Apaches, and Comanches, who resumed the war path as soon as the regular troops had been withdrawn.

They made history in more than the noble rec-

ord of their terrible hardships in the desert and of the battles they fought, for without them the Confederacy would inevitably have gained possession of all territory west of Texas and Kansas, right through to the Pacific, which, had it happened, must surely have served to prolong the war, to seriously embarrass the administration at Washington, and very possibly (who knows?) to have changed in some measure the terms of its ultimate conclusion.

In those days, the people generally of the States east of the Mississippi knew less of California, took less interest in it, concerned themselves less about it, than the average man to-day knows and concerns himself about the Island of Mindanao, in the Philippines.

True, for a decade it had been pouring a flood of millions into Eastern coffers, but comparatively few believed the fountains of California's wealth to be as relatively inexhaustible as they have since proved. Few not directly interested through family ties with adventurers to the coast, or through personal interest in its mines or trade, cared seriously whether that remote region was held for or lost to the Union.

And in the first desperate straits into which the administration found itself plunged by the active conflict along the Mason and Dixon Line, California was so nearly overlooked, if not actually forgotten, that, but for the patriotism and initiative within the State, all our Pacific coast territory, and probably the greater part of the

Rocky Mountain region, must have fallen under Confederate control.

Indeed, without early organisation to meet the emergency, such taking of the coast would have been easy — first, because, more hard pressed than the North for resources, the South was more keenly alert for means to take and hold possession of California's treasure.

Second, because she had on her remote west Texas frontier two stout and able partisans in Colonel John R. Baylor and his brother, Colonel George Baylor (both of whom it was the writer's privilege to know intimately thirty years ago), two of the finest types of the old Southwestern frontier school, battlers almost from their birth with raiding redskins, masters of the rude but deadly strategy of savage warfare, two of the gentlest men in peace and the most relentless in war, who were alive to the opportunity and eager to serve their cause.

Third, because California held heavy leaven of native Southerners, come out over the old Indianola and Butterworth trails.

Thus it was as early as July, 1861, shortly before the first call for volunteers in California, that Colonel John R. Baylor, having marched his little column of native, long-haired Texans, the elder veterans and the younger sons of the men of The Alamo and San Jacinto, from Uvalde up and to the head of Devil's River, west past Hudson's Wells to the Pecos, up that river to Horsehead Crossing, thence west to Comanche Springs,

to Eagle Springs, over to the Rio Grande and up stream to the then tiny Mexican *placita* of Franklin — now El Paso — crossed into New Mexican territory, seized the town of Doña Ana, and there established his headquarters.

And so posted, he boldly claimed for the Confederacy all territory between the Rio Grande and the Pacific coast!

But while Baylor was busy, at the same time Californians were neither blind to their danger nor idle. General E. V. Sumner, then commanding the few regulars on the coast, was concentrating his outlying garrisons at Los Angeles, as the point most liable to develop serious disaffection.

And Thomas Sprague, a merchant resident at La Paz, was writing Washington as follows: "The Secessionists are about to take possession of the Peninsula preparatory to acquiring a portion or the whole of Mexico, seizing the Panama steamers and thereby obtaining enough treasure to carry on the conquest into Alta California."

Meantime, recruiting had been going on in the North, so that in the early fall of 1861 Camp Latham had been established on the *cienega* between Santa Monica and Los Angeles, and there was finished the recruiting of the force that later became known as the California Column.

It was composed of the First and Fifth Volunteer Infantry, the First Cavalry and a light battery of four brass field pieces of the Third (Regular) Artillery; in all one thousand eight-

hundred men, commanded by Colonel James H. Carleton, previously a captain of the Sixth Regular Infantry.

For a time, invasion and temporary occupation of the two northern Mexican states was seriously considered at Washington, by seizing Guaymas and thus opening a possible route of attack of the Confederacy in the rear, along the Texas border.

But, obviously lacking available forces in the far West adequate to follow up any initial advantages that might be gained, this wholly raw piece of strategy was soon abandoned, and Carleton was ordered to move east on Yuma, to cross Arizona and New Mexico to the Rio Grande, and — do his best.

Shortly before the starting of the column, Colonel Baylor wrote his department commander as follows:

> California is on the eve of a revolution. There are many Southern men there who would chcerfully join us if they could get to us, and they could come well armed and mounted. I would ask permission to get all such men as choose to join us, and would further ask that some arrangement for the purchase of horses in California be made.
>
> I could now buy the best horses there for $50, and many Southern men would sell them for Confederate money. Another thing I take the liberty of suggesting is, that a force be placed in Western Arizona to watch the landing of United States troops in Guaymas, that they may not pass through Sonora to invade us.
>
> A party of Californians have just arrived, and report that there are no troops on the road at this time, but

that the United States government was trying to raise them for the purpose of invasion, and I am reliably informed that the government of Mexico has sent orders to the governor of Sonora to allow the passage of United States troops through that State.

Baylor's suggestions bore fruit. A plan was laid to rush troops through New Mexico to California, and thence to swing them east across the Rockies into the northwest, and General H. H. Sibley led the force assigned to the task.

In February, 1862, after a waterless march of ninety miles across the Jornado del Muerto (Journey of Death) plateau, his fainting and almost wholly exhausted column crept down through the huddle of black, ragged basalt boulders that surface the west escarpment of the plateau, where it breaks down to the Rio Grande at the little Mexican *placita* of Valverde.

He arrived to find that stretch of the river held by a Unionist force under General Canby, largely inferior to his own in numbers, but fresh — and interposed between him and what his men were dying for, *water*.

Retreat or even a detour impossible, an immediate action was inevitable, and was fought, virtually to the defeat of Sibley, notwithstanding Canby was finally forced to retire before his superior numbers, but only after Sibley's losses had been so heavy that his force was badly crippled.

Shortly thereafter emergencies along the Missouri compelled the transfer of nearly all of the few regular troops remaining in Colorado, New

Mexico and Arizona to the eastern field, leaving rare old Kit Carson and his skeleton regiment of Coloradoans and New Mexicans — nearly all of Mexican blood, who still hated the *Tejanos* of their day as bitterly as their fathers had hated the men of Goliad and San Jacinto — as the only guard of the scattered local settlements, the only bulwark against a new Confederate invasion.

And no more was this poorly defensible situation developed than, acting under the impulse of a common strategy but wholly independent of each other, Navajos, Apaches and Comanches began a relentless war on all the southern overland routes, on ranches and settlements, that lasted a whole year after the conclusion of the Civil War.

And it was just at this juncture that Colonel Carleton's California Column passed through Tucson, and entered upon four years of as hard campaigning and trying actions as any troops of any country ever had to face.

Some day I hope a faithful hand will write the history of our grand old Column, beginning it before taps has been sounded over the last of us — and even now not so many of us are able to answer roll call.

At the general history of the Column's work I can make no attempt; our regiments, and even the companies, were usually so widely scattered and operating in such isolated bodies that hardly any member of the column could do more than tell his personal experiences and observations. That

is all I shall undertake — a simple tale of happenings to me or to my immediate mates.

Strangers to any colour of restraint of themselves, much less by others, neither Peach nor Cox could stand army discipline, and thus were in perpetual hot water with their troop commander.

Nothing prevented their being cashiered, or worse, but the fact that for any desperate emergency that called for straight shooting, reckless courage backed by cool heads, they were soon found to be worth any ten men in their regiment.

Thus when, early in his service, Peach first shot one man and later cut another — both affairs over some trivial mess dispute — he was lucky enough to escape with only a few days in irons.

In each instance some scout or vidette work became necessary for which his colonel preferred trusting him to any other. For, no matter what his violence and insubordination, to his oath and colours Peach stayed true to the end of his enlistment.

— IV —

DESERT TRAGEDY AND COMEDY

THE California Column was largely recruited in Frisco and other bay towns, but there was none of the up-river or mountain camps that failed to send men. I joined Company A, Fifth California Volunteer Infantry, at the rendezvous at Camp Downey.

The fandango and gambling halls were still in full blast, but under better organisation than formerly, when in such dens no miner's, riverman's, or cattleman's life was safe until, by one alluring vice or another, he had been parted from his gold dust.

For most, to be sure, the bars, the gaming tables and the bedizened brown belles that set all heads awhirl in the sinuous, seductive mazes of the fandango, sufficed.

Whenever a "tight-wad" came along whom all these temptations proved incapable of separating from his buckskin sack, the first morning traveller over the chaparral-lined trail was likely to find his battered body where it had been thrown, after having been stripped by the thugs.

But times were changing; some law and a little

order were coming in. Bigger and broader if not better men owned the "banks" and ruled the benches where bespangled beauty sat enthroned — men who realised that they could safely rely on the springs in their faro boxes, the carefully sandpapered finger-tips of their dealers, the class of their whisky and the smiles of the *señoritas* to keep business booming: that thug work was crude, and, therefore, unworthy of them.

Thus it came about that all the better houses regularly employed guards, locally called "bouncers," to deal with the violent and to protect any one no longer able to take a safe observation of his surroundings through the bottom of a glass.

At that time the leading hall of chance of the town boasted two men of the bouncer stamp who "had never lost a dollar or planted a straight stiff"— that is, who had permitted no robbery of patrons by violence, and had killed none but "bad" men. Their names were Jack and Bill — and both sought to hide their physical identity, as carefully as they guarded their surnames, by dressing in the extreme of the most highly admired Mexican bandit fashion. They wore sombreros loaded with gold thread embroidery and "rolls"; tight-fitting trousers spangled down the outer seam with silver *conchas;* embroidered jackets short as a bull fighter's; broad belts set thick with great round silver *conchas,* fastened by enormously broad buckles of the same metal.

Notwithstanding it was well known that each had repeatedly taken sacks of gold dust from

drunken patrons and had later returned them intact, one forenoon a miner told Bill that Jack had taken and kept his sack, and that it was up to him to protect their good name by making Jack produce it.

Nor did Bill need any urging; the charge was a stain on their record. So he lost no time in searching out Jack and demanding an explanation.

In reply, Jack vowed he was innocent; insisted the man was drunk or crazy — and Bill fully credited him, and so told him.

But all day long it rankled in Jack's mind that his old mate, Bill, had even ventured to question him, until, night come, he could restrain himself no longer.

Fun and frolic were fast afoot in the dance hall, Bill sitting talking to a girl, when in front of them stepped Jack from a near-by door, covered Bill with his pistol, and very softly queried:

"William, have you the faintest idea of the identity of the distinguished individual whose honesty you have been calling in question? Say to him right now that you have lied about him, or he will start you on the road to the Eternal City."

Bill knew perfectly well he was in for a death struggle, but, game to the core, he answered:

"Why, Jack, I always thought you were too brave to kill a man without giving him a chance, even if you are a thief," and rose as he spoke.

He was scarcely on his feet before Jack shot, but the ball struck the great silver buckle on Bill's

belt and did no more harm than to knock him back into his seat.

Then the lead began to fly fast and furious, the hall was quickly emptied of all but the two leading performers, and a free stage left them.

And it was a free stage they surely needed; for scarcely had the last of the terror-blanched huddle of men and women disappeared through doors and windows before Jack and Bill, their pistols emptied and cast aside, were crouched and circling like panthers, each playing for an opening for a mortal thrust.

They fought in approved Mexican fashion — feet well gathered under them, left foot slightly advanced, great begilt sombreros extended in the left hand and flashing up and down, fairly effective shields against the bowie knives that played beneath them.

Neither flinched. In and out they darted, thrusting, slitting, but weakening fast of their wounds. Time and again the silver *conchas* on their belts saved them, for when fighting beneath hat shields most thrusts that count land low.

But as strength waned guard weakened, until, torn by bullets and slit to ribbons, they locked tight in a savage stabbing contest that never broke until both fell lifeless.

The " reputation " of the house was temporarily saved, but I am sure it was many a day before it found worthy successors of its dead bouncers.

It was early in 1862 that the advance of the

California Column began, the vanguard consisting of two companies of infantry, one troop of cavalry and two mountain howitzers, commanded by Captain W. P. Calloway. Our Company A was of this advance party, our captain, E. B. Frink; our lieutenants, William Oman and Thomas C. Chapman.

The tortures of that desert march I shall never forget; the first stretch from San Gorgonio to Yuma, the next from Yuma to Tucson. It was a year of unusual drought, even for that parched and blistering land.

Water holes usually dependable at that season had dried up, and, as usual in the desert through exceptionally dry spells, winds of nearly tornado violence filled the air with clouds of sand that blinded our eyes, parched our throats, and threatened the wreck of the expedition before it had gotten well started.

Indeed, our situation shifted from bad to worse, until finally one morning we found ourselves confronting a forty-mile stretch to the next water with bone dry canteens, and with all but one of our water tank wagons empty. Lieutenant Dick Hudson was our quartermaster, and nothing but his good judgment and steady nerve saved the column from collapse right there.

I was not the only one who regarded Hudson as the best all-round soldier of the entire command that marched out under Colonel Carleton, brave to wild recklessness, but always sparing his men instead of himself. That day the water

ration allowed us was a pint to the man every ten miles.

While a wise allowance to see us through — just fancy it, when, within twenty minutes after you had received your ration, the burning sand and scorching sun had one's lips and mouth parched and shrivelling.

But alike to prayers and curses Lieutenant Hudson remained deaf, until finally ranks were broken and the wagon tank rushed.

At first, the quartermaster tried to persuade us to patience and self-control; urged that if permitted our will and the reserve supply became exhausted we would be certain to perish before the next water could be reached; assured the men that neither he himself nor the wagon escort should touch a drop until the journey's end — which, in truth, they did not.

As well, however, try to check a rush of starving wolves, and it was not until after a sharp bit of fighting and the none too gentle use of fixed bayonets that he repelled our assault of the water supply and restored order.

Night come, every man-jack of us realised good old Dick had saved our lives. And when our colonel wanted to court-martial the entire detachment for insubordination, and Dick so eloquently pleaded the frightful suffering that had inspired it and won our immunity, he then became our idol, and so remained to the end of our service.

Little use had Dick for courts martial, for he was a rare good give-and-take fighter himself, and

believed in handing out personally any and all punishments needed.

One day on march, I remember, one of the " hard cases " in the company was grossly insolent to him. Another officer would have put the man under arrest and preferred charges.

But not so Dick. Instead, he jerked off his blouse, threw it on the ground, and smilingly remarked: " There on the ground is the officer and here's the man; square off, you blackguard, and I'll beat you to a pulp," and then promptly proceeded to make his proposition good.

I am glad to say that throughout my four years, eight months and twenty-one days' service, I had only two encounters with any of my California comrades, and of these I want to exonerate myself.

Before we left Frisco, Sam Stuart, the toughest rough-and-tumble fighter in the command, half crazed with drink, attacked me entirely without cause.

Still a youngster, I was unable to stand him off, and got a severe beating. The officers wanted me to prefer charges and to appear against him. This, however, I respectfully declined to do; and when asked for my reason for not wanting him punished told them that, being enlisted for three years, I had confidence I would be able to show Mr. Stuart before my service was finished that he had made a serious mistake.

And when from time to time I would say to him, in a bantering way, " Don't forget I'm going

to grow and fill out just for your sake, Sammy," it got to be the jest of the company, and the men were always guying me and wanting to know how long I figured it would take me to "fill out."

It was sometime in the summer of 1864 that my chance came. We were camped down on the Gila, sitting about our mess fire, eating bacon and hard tack, when C. D. Rush accidentally knocked Stuart's overcoat off a log and into the fire.

Instantly Stuart knocked Rush down, but before he could rise I jumped between them and sang out, "Look out, Sammy, for I have filled out!"

Then at it we went, hammer and tongs, and at it we stayed until Sammy had reached a condition to take, if not to enjoy, a short journey to the hospital tent on a stretcher.

In the first action of the column my regiment did not participate, but since it turned out to be bloodless we did not mind much. The First Cavalry and First Infantry overtook, surrounded and captured Dan Showalter, who was leading seventeen other Southern sympathisers east to meet the Confederate advance. We carried the lot into Yuma, where they were held prisoners until finally exchanged.

As we neared the Pima villages, news reached us that Captain Hunter was leading a band of *Tejanos* on an attempted invasion of California, and shortly thereafter we encountered evidence of their handiwork — the still smoking ruins of government forage stations. Evidently, they had

learned of our advance and were retiring eastward.

That they were occupying Picacho Pass our Indian scouts reported, but in what numbers we were unable to learn. Our colonel sent out our cavalry to circle and strike them. They completely surprised Hunter's force, and routed it.

And there the column lost its two first men, Lieutenant James Barrett and two troopers, whose bodies still lie within a few feet of the Southern Pacific Railway, in Picacho Pass, unless they have lately been removed.

Parched and blistered by day and chilled stiff of nights around our meagre desert camp fires, we pushed east until, in small detachments, the last of the column had reached Tucson, tattered, emaciated, limping, where our officers found it as hard to supply us with food and forage as it had been to furnish us water throughout our desert march.

The Pima Indians had little to sell, and we had less of goods to tempt them to barter — in fact nothing but *manta,* cotton drilling, which was traded at the rate of one yard of manta for four quarts of *pinole,* a most nutritious native food preparation of corn and sugar; one yard for seven quarts of wheat; one yard for fifty pounds of hay or one hundred and fifty pounds of green fodder.

While we had no more encounters with the Confederates until after we reached the Rio Grande, every step of our progress from Tucson was contested by the Navajos and Apaches who,

finding the whites at war among themselves, were quick to avail themselves of such a convenient opportunity to square some old scores of their own.

The early overland travel west from Indianola had needlessly shot them up a lot, stolen their ponies and even some of their women. Every time our trail entered a mountain pass, neared a possible place of ambush or approached a water hole, we were certain of a surprise and the wounding or killing of some of our force.

And talk of ambushes, the Apaches were the wise boys at that trade — past masters the devil himself could not equal. While they never got us badly, a quartermaster's train of the forces following us they simply swallowed up.

Some way, the train and its escort of a half troop of cavalry got separated from the main command. At the time they were crossing a wide reach bare of shelter of any sort other than here and there a scattered growth of sotol, a thin-stemmed shrub no white man could hide a dog behind. But it sufficed for the Apaches.

Spying the train hours in advance of its entry into this barren, bushless region, they placed themselves in ambush near to and along either side of the trail, *by burying their bodies in the sands and concealing their faces, and yet getting air to breathe, by hollowing out the bulbous roots of the sotol!*

Thus the train had passed well within this cruelly cunning net before the Indians sprang yelling from the sand, risen demon-wise by pure

magic it must have seemed to their doomed victims, and in ten minutes had speared every last man of both the escort and the drivers.

We had sharp actions at Apache Teju, Dragoon Springs and Apache Pass, and it was at the latter place that we handed them a pretty neat surprise.

They were holding the pass in strong force, and neither cavalry nor infantry made much progress dislodging them. Meantime their sharpshooters were scoring off us, wounding Lieutenant Young and one of our surgeons and killing three men.

One group about 800 yards above us was especially troublesome, as they had several rifles of as long range as our own. The most troublesome of these occupied a lofty crotch of an oak-tree, whence a puff of smoke was seen to sift out through its foliage every time one of our men was hit.

The gunners of the howitzer had been trying to get his range, but failed. Just then the hospital steward, an old discharged artilleryman who had grown grey in the service with General Scott, came along, pushed the gunners from the howitzer, elevated it to his satisfaction, took his sight, and pulled the lanyard. I certainly never saw or heard of such a shot. A sharpshooter with a rifle could not have beaten it. The shell struck the tree and exploded apparently in its centre, for nothing was left of it but a slivered stump.

It was on this march that Jack Mathews converted his name from a reproach to an inspiration.

Shortly earlier, Jack had deserted, fled toward the Mexican border, but had been captured.

While awaiting trial he was held prisoner, hobbled with a ball and chain. His folly was due to no worse sentiment than resentment of discipline, for he was a whole-hearted Union man and feared neither man nor devil, but to take orders and endure discipline rankled in his untamed heart till it drove him to try a getaway.

One morning Jack begged for and got permission to go into the hills with the wood wagons, Sergeant Brady, commanding the small escort, being instructed to take good care that he did not escape.

Keen for any occupation, the sergeant set him cooking. The very next morning at dawn, while Jack was pottering about the fire, carrying over his arm his ball and chain, a stalking party of Apaches fired into the camp, killing two soldiers and breaking Brady's leg.

Carrying Brady inside a small *trinchera,* built of stones, which they had thrown up the night before for just such an emergency, Jack seized two guns; and then he and Brady proceeded to give the Apaches such a hot stand-off that, after three or four hours' ineffectual effort to dislodge them, they retired.

Meantime, however, their two remaining comrades had also been killed, leaving Jack and his sergeant the only living tenants of the bloody *trinchera.*

Brady was bleeding badly. Prompt surgical

aid was needed to save his leg, if not his life. While the task of getting his comrade back to the command seemed an utterly hopeless undertaking, Jack did not hesitate to tackle it. Tying the ball and chain about his waist, he took Brady on his back and himself carrying their two guns, staggered away toward the command.

The retirement of the Indians had been only a ruse. No sooner had Jack left the *trinchera* far enough to permit the manœuvre, than the enemy cut in behind and renewed the attack, and it was only by the superior range of their rifles that the two men were able to hold off the Indians and to slowly advance until, finally, their fire was heard in the camp and a squad of cavalry rode out to their rescue.

Our colonel reported the affair to Washington, with the result that Jack's offence was pardoned and he was restored to duty, with full pay.

In the autumn of 1862 we went into cantonment at La Mesilla, now New Mexico, about three thousand of us, where for a time we lay quietly, getting the rest the badly worn command sadly needed. Life there was without notable incident save the occasional wild outbreaks of one or another of the desperate men of that lawless frontier or of our own command. There were some real, sure-enough fighters around in those days, and they could never get their own consent to stay long idle.

One day a big, powerful Mexican was arrested for robbing a soldier. A few hours later he es-

caped, but got a bullet in his leg from one of his guards.

He succeeded in reaching Mesilla, but there he was retaken by United States Marshal Lemmons, who started with him for our camp. On the road two men of my company met the marshal, and he turned the prisoner over to them.

Passing a little store on their way to camp, the prisoner asked permission to enter and buy some food. His guard assenting, they entered the store, one guard in the lead, the other following the prisoner.

Scarcely had they passed the threshold before the prisoner seized a hatchet that lay on a barrel and brained the guard in front of him. Almost at the same instant, the rear guard, Dewey, shot the Mexican, but the prisoner leaped the counter, grabbed a loaded pistol, whirled on Dewey, and killed him.

But before Dewey went down he had put three more shots into his man's breast.

Hearing the shooting, the United States marshal came on a run, and just as the Mexican dashed out of the store, emptied both barrels of a shot-gun into him.

It was a marvellous case of frenzied hardihood, but, literally weighted down with lead as the Mexican was, rent and torn by the shots he had received until his carcass was little better than a sieve, on down the street he ran, apparently as strong as ever.

And believe it though the reader well may not,

it is the simple truth that presently he was met by a man of my company named Spencer, and shot six times more, with a small Colt's navy. Then they clinched, Spencer seizing the hand that still held the deadly hatchet.

Spencer himself was a powerful man, but he was helpless in the hands of the mad Mexican, who lifted him bodily aloft, hurled him to the ground and was in the act of finishing him with his hatchet when a gambler ran up and shot him in the head with a small derringer. This shot saved Spencer's life, stunned the Mexican sufficiently to give him time to regain his feet, possess himself of the hatchet and to bury it in the head of his enemy.

And at the end of the hour more that this marvellously tenacious outlaw lived, his father came into camp and told us he could now breathe freely for the first time in years, as he had long feared meeting death at his son's hands.

It was there at Mesilla that my old chum Peach came near getting his light put out by a military sentence. He and Cox had joined the cavalry, as will be remembered, and were the terror of their troop.

Nothing but their supreme value as scouts left them out of the guard tent and in active service. Some wild devilment they were always pulling off, but their worth on detached service usually gained them leniency from our colonel.

But one day Peach got into trouble dangerously deep again — got into a dispute in a neighbouring

village of Pueblo Indians, and was struck on the head and knocked into the live coals of a smouldering mesquite fire.

Before rising he shot and killed the Indian who had struck him, and then, as he was scrambling off a bed he found altogether too hot for longer occupancy, a squaw sprang at him with a raised club, and a buck with a machete, but this pair, too, he dropped dead before they got in striking reach of him.

When, at last, Peach got out of the *jacal* where the fight occurred, his blouse was on fire, and his back and shoulders were badly blistered. But, hastening back to his quarters, he had succeeded in shifting to a fresh uniform before the roll was beaten that called us all to fall in for inspection by the Indians, who had followed him into camp and demanded justice of our colonel.

Peach was promptly identified, but denied having had any part in the affair, enduring the tortures of his burns without a grimace or wince of pain; and it was only when an old Indian demanded that his blouse be stripped off and his blistered back exposed that further denial became useless and he was ordered into irons.

But when, a few days later, he was brought to trial before a court-martial and was asked by the judge-advocate if he wanted a lawyer, Peach coolly replied that he never had any use for lawyers and was too old to care to begin mixing up with them.

"But," the judge-advocate insisted, "your case

is very serious, and you are certain to receive a heavy sentence if convicted."

"That's all right, Judge," Peach answered; "much obliged for the information, but still I say I don't want no jack-leg lawyer; I just want to ask this court one question, if you will give me your word that it will be answered truthfully."

Surprised, the court assented, told him to put his question and it should have a plain, straight answer.

"Well, then," said Peach, "just please tell me whatever would you do if knocked into a d—d hot mesquite fire and had three crazy Indians springing at you with machetes and clubs? Would you lie there to be hacked up and roasted, or would you try to fight your way out?"

There was just nothing to say to that appeal, and old Peach was promptly exonerated as soon as enough evidence had been taken to measurably establish the record of a formal trial.

But while, as will be evident from these yarns, our life in those years was a seldom-broken chain of tragedies of one sort or another, comedy, rude to be sure, but none the less side-splitting, was now and then developing to brighten the monotony of service in camp.

One night Peach, Cox and I got a leave and went into Mesilla for a little fun — and incidentally to replenish our badly depleted exchequer, for, what with scouting and marching, Cox had had little time to ply his skill at gambling.

I thought more than twice before consenting to

go with them, but times had been pretty dull with me, and I found myself unable to resist a chance for another whirl with my old mates.

We were not long finding a game, in Mesilla's leading saloon. Pete Kennedy, the saloon keeper, sat in with us along with the sheriff, and a gambler known as "The Little Giant."

It was a Saturday, and our game dragged on throughout the night, with varying luck on our side — always varying luck, for while there was never any variation in Cox's ability to collar the bigger pots, sometimes Peach and I lost more than at others.

At length the grey of dawn began to pale the candles, and the mellow bells of the old mission church across the plaza began calling the faithful to five-o'clock mass, a diversion that for a time gave thought and talk about the table a religious bent.

Pete Kennedy remarked that when he was a boy and attending Sunday school "back in the States," he could "recite every verse of the New Testament, and a lot of 'em backward."

The sheriff allowed that he had been brought up to measure things up by the Golden Rule, but admitted that west of the Missouri there appeared to be a lot of situations the rule did not seem to fit any too well.

Cox observed that he did not know much of the Bible, personally, but had heard a heap of folks speak mighty well of it.

Peach said he had heard the Bible tells about

a feller walking on water, but that, himself, he had never struck any water over his head in depth he had not had to swim in.

The Little Giant conceded that he had been educated for the ministry and had preached for a time, but had cut out of the religious game so long ago that he wouldn't undertake to referee any disputes about it.

Presently, the sheriff said, " Pete Kennedy, I should like to remark that in my opinion, there is no gentleman at the table who can recite the Lord's Prayer correctly, and since you used to know so much about the New Testament, I'm having you particularly in mind."

" Don't want to bet none, do you? " asked Pete.

" Sure," replied the sheriff: " name it yourself."

" Here's a hundred that says I can recite her the first rattle out of the box," promptly called Pete, and planked on the table five gold twenties.

The sheriff promptly covered the money and told Pete to proceed.

For a moment Pete seemed puzzled, but then he started bravely, " Now I lay me down to sleep; if I should die before I wake, I pray —"

When " Hold on, Pete," the sheriff interrupted; " I apologise; the money's yours."

— V —

MANGUS COLORADO

IT was in January, 1863, that General West led our column out of Mesilla on an expedition against the famous old Apache war chief, Mangus Colorado.

For years he had been a terror of the southern overland trails and settlements — the ferocious expression of the hatred he had inherited direct from old Cochise himself, who had never taken the war-path against the whites until a reckless party of overland immigrants, travelling the Indianola-Yuma trail, wantonly shot his son.

And even then Cochise did not go to war until his request that his son's murderers be arrested and punished was refused by the commanding officer of the nearest government troops, a refusal that set the old chief ravening like a wolf from end to end of the territory lying between the Rio Grande and the Colorado and first and last caused the loss of several thousand lives.

For some time before the outbreak of the war of secession, that district had been so heavily garrisoned by regular troops that Mangus's activities had been largely circumscribed, but directly the war emptied the frontier posts of their garrisons, he was quick to resume his old bloody tricks.

And now this was the first opportunity a sufficiently large body of troops had been again assembled west of the Rio Grande to justify active operations against him.

We marched west of Mesilla through Ojo Caliente, later known as Hudson's Springs (for it was there my old comrade, Colonel Dick Hudson, later settled and lived to the end of his days) and ultimately went into camp at Apache Teju. Only one cabin remained standing at the old stage station; the Indians had burned all the others, and why it was spared by them was a mystery to us.

There at Apache Teju we found encamped Mr. Walker, leading a strong party of prospectors, who wisely regarded it as unsafe to proceed farther until Mangus Colorado and his band had been accounted for by the troops.

Moved, doubtless, by realisation of the enormous difficulties always experienced by the troops whenever they tried to strike a decisive blow on a large band of Indians, on account of the far superior mobility of the forces of the red chiefs, General West determined to first try strategy.

That the highly questionable finish of the affair was deliberately planned by our general I should be very sorry to believe. Rather, I have preferred to think, once he got the old chief in his power the general became obsessed with the idea that no treaty could long bind him to peace, and that the safety of the frontier justified any measure effective to procure it.

All I can do is to tell the story of Mangus's tak-

ing and death precisely as I know it happened. And, anyway, since the government did not call the general to account, it is not up to me to criticise him.

The facts are that General West ordered Captain Sheldon to advance with a party of twenty troopers, instructed to seek to obtain a parley with Mangus and to do his utmost to persuade him to come into our camp to make a treaty.

Mangus and his main band, several thousand of them, were then known to be camped in the mountains back of Pinos Altos, then a young but active placer mining camp. Most of the actual gold washers were Mexicans; the few white men in the camp were almost exclusively traders.

Captain Sheldon's detachment was guided by Juan Arollo, who served with our command throughout the war as a scout. And I want to say right here that he was the finest Indian trailer, guide and scout in the entire Southwest. Indeed, he was so generally ranked by the foremost regular officers of that day.

Colonel Kit Carson used to call Arollo the bravest man he had ever met, and I agree with him. Colonel Kit loved to tell of actions with the Indians before the war in which he had had Arollo with him. He related that many a time he had seen him leave his force and, single handed, attack a charging war party, always coming back with some trophy of his recklessness and usually with more or less arrows decorating his body,

along with a choice assortment of slashes and bullet holes.

To try to enumerate the wounds this man carried or to tell in detail the actions he had been in, would be to rank one as the maddest romancer, but the truth is that Arollo's daily life far surpassed the conceptions in desperate adventure of the wildest romancer. Ask any old-timer of the days of 1861-5; you can depend he will bear me out.

Arollo led Captain Sheldon northwest through the mountains, making a détour around Pinos Altos and avoiding all roads and trails until, always working well ahead of the command, he sighted Mangus's scouts lying along the crests of outer spurs of the range and spying out the country below, precisely like lions lurk along the brink of naked desert butte crests, marking down their victims and the easiest route to stalk them.

With a redskin in sight, or any other situation which promised a chance of a fight, Arollo was always like a raging, tugging hound in leash. It is therefore easy to realise how it must have galled him to carry out orders and signal Mangus's scouts peace and parley signs, instead of charging straight into them.

But Arollo never disobeyed orders any more than he shirked a deadly hazardous duty, and so he rode straight forward, up into the outpost of the Apache stronghold, with hand raised, palm forward, in the usual sign of peace. And doubt-

less it was nothing but the sheer astonishment of the Indians that saved his life.

No Indian harms the demented, holding him as touched by the Great Spirit and under his protection, and certainly they must have thought that none but a crazy man would deliberately cast himself within the power of Mangus's implacable hatred alike of American and Mexican.

He was blindfolded and led back still deeper into the heart of the range, where, in one of the wide and level open glades one finds in the Rockies at the top of the most precipitous and nearly impassable gorges, he found Mangus's village and was brought into the old chief's presence.

The village must have numbered at least two or three thousand, for the little beehive-like wickiups, built of slender boughs stuck in the ground and intertwined at top, the only shelter those nomads enjoyed when on the march or the war-path, filled all the glade and overflowed among the surrounding pines.

Arollo told Mangus that a big war party of the Great White Chief lay encamped at the foot of the range, with orders to pursue, harass and fight him and his people until they were subdued, disarmed and helpless, unless he personally would come down to the camp, there to make a treaty of peace; that near by lay a small detachment of the White Chief's soldiers who would escort him down and safely back to his people, if he would consent to come; that if he refused to come, in less than six months half his people would be

wiped out and not a pony nor a gun left to the survivors.

An arbitrary and absolute chief of his people, Mangus called no council, advised with none of his followers, not even with the then young but already redoubtable Manuelito or Geronimo. Accustomed, like the great field general he was, to meet all emergencies with an instantaneous decision, he mounted and boldly rode with Arollo, met Captain Sheldon with a grim "How!" and signed his readiness to proceed.

I happened to be present in front of the cabin at Apache Teju the afternoon that Mangus was brought in, and heard all of the brief conversation that passed between Colonel West and him.

Never shall I forget the coming — or the going — of old Mangus that day.

Mounted on about as wild and as nearly uncontrollable a little sorrel pony as any Peach and Cox used to handle when we were together in California, notwithstanding his sixty-odd years, his frail shell of a saddle and stirrups so short that his knees were constantly jabbing at his chin, Mangus sat tight to that pony as its own coat of hair, as, frenzied by strange sights and noises of our camp, it fought him for freedom and flight back up among the other wild things that people the sombre pine-clad gorges of its native hills.

Personally, both in physique and in bearing, Mangus was the most magnificent specimen of savage manhood I have ever seen. He was six feet five inches of stature, erect and haughty of

pose, with a grimly severe expression of countenance, rigid as a face cut in stone.

To none but General West and his staff did he offer salutation; for soldiers he held a supreme contempt. In fact he once remarked to an interpreter that a soldier is lower than a dog, because a soldier obeys orders while a dog does not.

Dismounting in front of the cabin, he shook hands with General West and his staff, and then he and the general entered the cabin. But no more had Mangus passed well within the doorway than General West quickly stepped outside. Surprised, and evidently suspicious, the Chief started to follow the general, but was met by the fixed bayonets of two guards.

Glaring for a moment at the general like a maddened wild beast about to attack, old Mangus very quietly asked, in Spanish, "What new insult are you planning for me, Chief?"

"You have murdered your last white victim, you old scoundrel," replied General West.

"But not until we were attacked by the white men who come digging up my hills for the yellow rock. For five years I have held my young braves off the war-path," said the Chief.

"Perhaps," answered General West; "but look down into Cook's Cañon and see the bleached bones of the five hundred women and children you and your people massacred there."

"But you — you, Chief, are a greater murderer than I am, for I can see that after beguiling me

into your power under promise of a truce and to arrange a peace treaty, you have had in your heart no other purpose than to take and kill me."

Whereupon, turning to Sergeant of the Guard Folgam, General West said: "Sergeant, this old murderer has escaped from every command that has had him captive and under guard. I want him to-morrow morning, dead or alive. Do you understand, Sergeant? I want him *dead* — or alive!"

That night every man of the command rolled up in his blankets certain something was coming.

Nor was it long coming. Scarcely an hour after taps sounded, about ten o'clock, three shots rang out on the still night air.

Directly thereafter, Sergeant Folgam marched across to General West's tent and reported that Mangus had been shot by the guard, while trying to escape.

"Is he dead?" asked the general.

"He is, sir," replied the sergeant.

"Very well, Sergeant," said the general; "then let his guard go to sleep."

James Collier and George Mead were the two guards who first shot Mangus, and then Sergeant Folgam rushed into the cabin and gave him a ball through the head with his pistol.

The next morning our command was formed and on the march before daylight, headed for an attack of Mangus's village. Bar the massacre of troops, this affair was much like the later unfortunate Custer campaign against the Sioux.

An advance detachment of two troops of cavalry, under Captains McClave and Sheldon, struck the village before our infantry could get in range, so that all we found when we reached the field were two dead squaws, who happened to be two of the wives of Mangus, and a few dead bucks. The rest had scattered like quail among the pines and cliffs. Somebody had blundered — firing and giving the alarm before our forces were disposed within striking distance.

Pursuit of the scattered band through those fastnesses would have been nothing short of stupidity, for they would have been perpetually potting our men from ambush, while we could never hope to bring them to a decisive encounter. So, after a few days the general marched the cavalry back to the Mesilla cantonment and left our infantry companies to guard Pinos Altos for a time.

Turkeys and deer were plentiful in the hills around the camp, and, notwithstanding the risk, slip out after them our boys now and then would. One Sunday morning six of my company so contrived to evade the sentries; and scarcely had they passed out of sight of camp before we heard heavy firing.

Immediately Lieutenant Higdon was ordered to lead out a party of twenty of us to their relief. On our double-quick across the hill crest, we passed one of our men returning, Bill Patterson, and our lieutenant ordered him to fall in. But,

although he had his gun with him, later we noted that Bill had failed to fall in.

When we reached the hunting party, we found Private Huzzy killed, Sergeant Siddon mortally wounded, old Hunt so badly scared he was no longer able to load and fire his gun, while Private Reed was busy making a splendid fight of what must have seemed to him a sure enough forlorn hope.

While he had killed five of the attacking party, his enemies numbered at least sixty warriors. Directly we opened on them, however, they dispersed, and then we carried our dead and wounded into camp.

When Bill Patterson was brought up before Captain Smith, under charges for failing to fall in with us when so ordered by Lieutenant Higdon, and questioned, he replied: "Well, Captain, you know it was the Sabbath, and I had on my Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and didn't want to get them bloody."

But since our captain did not pose as a particularly religious man, Bill's plea won him nothing better than the privilege of doing double duty and plenty of outer picket post service for a month.

After our return to Mesilla, desertions became very frequent. Finally, when a private named Clifford deserted and was caught and ironed and, while in charge of Sergeant Miller of K Company, contrived to negotiate release from his irons and to escape, General West was furious.

And while, according to regulations, a delin-

quent non-commissioned officer is placed under arrest in his quarters, the general had Miller ironed and thrown into the guard house. At this the whole company rebelled, and refused to drill until the sergeant had been released from irons. All save one man laid down their arms.

At 10 A. M., the long roll was beaten and Lieutenant Pattis was ordered to march his men without arms upon the parade ground. Company A of the Fifth Infantry was formed on the left of Company K, Company E on their right, and Company D in their front, while the cavalry was lined up behind the infantry. Everybody knew hell was going to pop somehow for somebody, *pronto*.

As soon as the formation was finished, General West rode up in front of the mutinous company, sabre drawn, and demanded:

"Is there any soldier of this company who refuses to drill or do duty?"

Promptly, in a clear strong voice, Corporal Smith, the leader of the mutiny, answered:

"I for one, sir, will neither drill nor do duty until Sergeant Miller is released from irons."

For a moment the general sat gazing at the corporal, as if in a brown study, while the ranks stood silent as the death all felt sure to be coming. Then the general ordered:

"Corporal, march fifteen paces to the front!"

Smith marched out steadily, like the good soldier he was.

The general ordered him to remove his hat. He obeyed.

Then the general ordered Captain Mitchell of D Company to swing his company to the left, opening a clear space beyong the corporal, looking down the main street of the camp. Riding up to the corporal, once more the general demanded: "Will you go to duty?"

"Not until the irons are knocked off of Sergeant Miller," he firmly replied.

Wheeling his horse, the general then ordered: "Captain Mitchell, shoot that man!"

"Load; ready; aim; fire!" called the captain.

A volley crashed, but Smith stood untouched, and half smiling, it seemed. The firing squad had shot high.

Yet once again the general put the same question to the corporal, and received the same answer; once more ordered Captain Mitchell to fire. Again the volley flew wild, this time killing a private of A Company, who was serving General West as cook, riddling a government forage wagon with holes and killing its team, and shot the leg off of a woman who was crossing the camp street, starting a free-for-all skedaddle for cover of everybody left in that end of camp, mules included.

The general was furious. Riding up behind the firing squad, he commanded: "Load; ready; aim! Down with your guns, now down; down, I say, or I will split every man of you with my sabre! Now fire!"

And yet Smith fell with only one bullet in his chest!

The rest had been willing to hazard death at the colonel's sabre!

Rising on one elbow, the corporal feebly called:

"Don't go to duty, boys, until the irons are knocked off Sergeant Miller!" and then fell back, dead.

Then the general rode down the line of K Company and in turn presenting his sabre point at the breast of each and every man of them, demanded: "Will you do duty?"

And from each got a vigorous, if not a wholehearted, "Yes!"

The rest of the day K Company was kept at the hardest kind of drill. And when we were all formed for dress parade in the evening, he addressed us:

"Soldiers, I want you to understand that there have been over fifty desertions from this command in the face of the enemy, and that hereafter any man who refuses to do duty will not live to repeat his offence."

Pretty hard seemed to us then the general's discipline, but I have since come to realise he was undoubtedly in the right.

In March, 1863, we were ordered to Fort Stanton. On the march up past the soda lake and through the enormous deposit of pulverised gypsum known as The White Sands, that extends over much of the plain between San Augustine and Tularosa, signs of Indians were seen.

Our orders were to keep well closed up and never to stray from the command. But when we got up into the timber near the head of the Ruidoso, several of the men slipped out after game, for we used to get deadly tired of nothing but hardtack and bacon.

They had not been gone long before we heard heavy firing, and ten of us were ordered to the rescue. Double-quicking over a little hill toward the sound of the firing, what should we charge right into but a flock of about a hundred wild turkeys, our hunters close upon their heels. Resist the opportunity, of course, we could not, and joined our comrades bombarding them.

Startled by the still heavier firing, forty more men were rushed out to our relief, our first lieutenant, Thomas Chapman, leading them. And once he reached us and discovered that, while, to be sure, we were actively engaged with a befeathered enemy, that nevertheless the alarm had been a false one, he was mad all through.

Presently, when he learned that we had not brought down a single bird, we got about the hardest cursing I ever heard a bunch of men receive. Just then I saw a turkey ducking through the grass about fifty yards away, and took after him, shooting my best, but to my discomfiture in a double sense. For I both failed to get the turkey and succeeded in getting myself sent back to camp under arrest.

But when I was brought up before my captain, the worst I got was, "Sorry I've got to dismiss

this complaint; you ought all to be court-martialed for your infernally bad marksmanship. If I could spare you out of the ranks, I would turn every man of you into camp cooks."

How we came to do such shocking shooting I cannot explain, but I suppose things have to happen that way sometimes.

Fort Stanton had been occupied and burned by the rebels shortly before its occupation by the New Mexico and California troops. The post was in ruins. Only the sutler's store had been made habitable. The troops were all under canvas, set up within the blackened adobe walls.

At the time, famous old Kit Carson, the greatest scout and Indian fighter the Southwest ever knew, was the colonel commanding the post. His own troops were all native Mexicans from Santa Fé and the northern *placitas,* among whom Kit had spent most of his life.

In his own command was a contract surgeon, Dr. Whitlock, a kindly old man, who previous to the outbreak of hostilities had been very friendly with the Navajos, and who was beloved by them for the uniform justice and kindness with which he had treated them.

One day Lieutenant Graden returned from a scout through the Capitan Mountains with his troop of New Mexicans, and it became noised about camp that he had made a big kill of Navajos. In his troop was a sergeant named Kelly who hated Lieutenant Graden, and who went to

Dr. Whitlock and told him that Graden had made his big kill by inducing a village he found to come to a parley and then, after getting them drunk and helpless, had massacred the lot.

"I don't believe that of Captain Graden," the doctor replied, "but if it is as you say, it was a cowardly trick."

Keen for the chance to embroil his captain, Kelly hastened to him and told him that Dr. Whitlock said he was a coward for killing the Indians.

Drinking heavily in celebration of the success of his scout, and infuriated by the alleged charge of cowardice, Graden hastened across the parade ground to the sutler's store, where the doctor and other officers, Colonel Kit Carson included, were playing cards. He cursed the doctor outrageously, called him a cowardly old squaw-man, and slapped his face.

Colonel Carson ordered him to his quarters under arrest. As he turned to leave the room, the doctor calmly said to him:

"Captain Graden, I do not know why you have made this assault on me, but when you are sober I will show you that I am not a coward."

That afternoon Dr. Whitlock wrote and sent a letter to Captain Graden, in which he reminded him that, since they were both men of family, it ill became them to pursue a quarrel certain to end in the death of one or both, and then proceeded to carefully state precisely what he had actually said to Sergeant Kelly.

But the captain continued his drinking and did not open the letter.

The next morning Dr. Whitlock was standing talking to Colonel Carson in front of the latter's tent, which faced the centre of the parade ground, when Captain Graden approached and handed the doctor a note, which we afterward learned read:

"You old cur of a squaw-man, you have to fight me this morning."

Glancing quickly at the note, the doctor quietly asked: "Captain, you surely cannot mean this?"

"But, by — I certainly do!" growled Graden.

Their pistols flashed out simultaneously, Graden's a navy six, the doctor's a small five-shooter, and the fight was on.

Unsteady of his all-night debauch, Graden's two first shots missed, when the doctor shot him close to the heart. This so shocked Graden that his next four shots also flew wild. Then, his pistol emptied, he drew a second he had concealed within his blouse, and with his first shot from it lodged a ball within an empty chamber of the doctor's five-shooter, putting it out of action.

But in that same instant, it must have been, the doctor's last shot struck Graden in the left breast, close to his first wound, and he fell cursing and calling Lieutenant Morris to turn out his troop and avenge his death.

Some of the bystanders urged Dr. Whitlock to run for the quarters of the California troops, but the doctor replied:

"He called me a coward, and this day I will run from no one."

Before Colonel Carson could stop them, out poured Graden's Mexicans, and the brave old doctor fell, riddled by more than twenty bullets.

The entire murderous company was placed under arrest, but, one by one, they escaped. And to this day the bodies of the doctor and the captain lie side by side, near to where they fell, beneath the pines of old Fort Stanton, on a broad-topped hillock thickly planted with the bones of other men who died with their boots on.

— VI —

SCOUTING THE JOURNEY OF DEATH

ONCE over the New Mexico border, our companies of the California Gold Brigade were scattered from the Rio Grande to the Pourgatoire.

Some fought Comanches and Kiowas with Kit Carson in the north, while others of us chased Navajos and Apaches as far south as the Texas line.

Many were the sharp fights and hot pursuits we had — for while enlisted as infantry we were mounted and served as cavalry — through the deep gorges of the Sacramento and Guadalupe Mountains, along the head waters of the Delaware, Rocky Arroyo, Dog Cañon, the Ruidoso and Bonita, down into the valley of the Pecos and out over the arid stretches of the Staked Plains, within which in those days the only known living water was Mescalero Spring.

To-day the vast expanse of the Staked Plains, now better known as the Texas Panhandle, is rapidly coming under fruitful tillage through irrigation, made possible by the unlimited stores of water that lie so near the surface that in many places permanent tanks are made by the use of only a plough and scraper.

In those days it was believed to be so waterless that several of our men out on scouts lost their lives of thirst at points where, had they only known, they might have dug to water with their knives!

However, if we paid the scot, some in death and all in suffering, of the pacification of the Staked Plains, we at least have the satisfaction of knowing that it was we who made possible the prosperity of such of the later generation as have since planted there their homes.

One of the best soldiers and by far the best scout and Indian trailer of our California regiments was undoubtedly First Lieutenant Albert J. Fountain, of the First California Volunteer Cavalry, who later became the first attorney-general of the State of Texas under Governor Davis, in the reconstruction days after the war.

Brave to utter recklessness, he loved nothing so much as to get out on a scout in the mountains, often entirely alone, never with more than one or two men at his back. Frequently he stayed out on such scouts one to two weeks, in country so thick with hostile Navajos or Mescaleros that nothing but the outdoing of their own cunning enabled him to win safe return to his command.

Nor did he always return entirely scatheless. In fact, one such prowl well out into the Jornado del Muerto (the Journey of Death), to the west of the Oscuros, nearly cost him his life.

Working east toward Fort Stanton, one evening found him travelling parallel to a much-used In-

dian trail that led up through a heavily timbered dry cañon to the north of Tularosa.

His mate on the scout was the famous Juan Arollo, who the year before had brought old Mangus Colorado into General West's power, and the two of them made the strongest pair at the Indian game that could be dealt out of our military deck.

For two days and nights they had been without water. Their mounts were fagged to a near finish, and they themselves were enduring the tortures none can understand except such as have been forced to like deprivation in the blazing heat of the southern plains.

Water and rest they must have or lose their horses, or perhaps even themselves perish. To be sure, they were approaching a spring well known to both of them. But it burst out of the base of a cliff and quickly disappeared in the thirsty sands close beside the trail, and was often in possession of the hostiles.

It was imperative they should take the chance. So, tying their horses in the pines a good half mile above the spring, they carefully stalked down to it, and to their joy found it unoccupied.

With great care to avoid leaving any sign of their visit, they first drank their own fill and then each made a bucket of his hat and climbed back to their famishing mounts.

One more round trip they so made successfully, and were returning for a third when, stealing softly forward as before, the keen ear of Arollo

caught the soft clink of unshod pony hoofs in the loose shingle of the steep descent from the summit of the range to the spring. A band of Indians — ten to one a war party — was approaching.

Thus in those days was one new peril ever dovetailing into an old one; when one felt safest, then it was *cuidarse* closest.

Fortunately night had fallen, with a half moon aloft that helped greatly to enable noiseless movement. Indeed, without the moon there would have been no war party abroad, for no Indians ever went out on foray in the dark of the moon. Night prowlers they were by instinct and habit, like all other wild predatory things the world over.

The white men had brought their horses down to within three hundred yards of the spring for better convenience in watering. While Fountain remained on watch, Arollo hastened back to muzzle the animals, for one neigh would have betrayed them to the enemy.

Slipping, sliding, the band jogged rapidly down the declivity, until it sounded like the shingle had gone adrift and was cascading into the gulch.

Stealing cautiously forward, for advance foot guards might be working down the slope ahead of the band, Fountain dropped among some boulders a scant thirty yards above the spring, where he had a clear view of its immediate environs.

In small groups and one by one, the usual loose Indian formation on march, they filed in, until

Fountain had counted approximately eighty warriors.

Quickly the simple gear was stripped from the ponies, a half dozen young bucks were told off to drive them down the gulch as soon as watered, to where the cañon opened out and better feed was to be found, while the rest of the band busied themselves opening their *parfleches* (great pouches made of rawhide), and emptying them of meat.

Soon a number of tiny fires were alight — and it was of the Indians we had early learned that only at an actually tiny camp-fire may one conveniently cook and thoroughly and comfortably warm himself — slender boughs cut, and on their sharpened points thin strips of juicy venison were cooking and sending up into Fountain's nostrils tempting odours that left it hard for him, half famished as he was, to resist descending unbidden to the savage feast.

A soft hiss in his ear gave Fountain his first hint of Arollo's return. There for an hour they lay watching the camp of the enemy until, stuffed as only savages can gorge themselves, one after another stretched out where he had been squatting and eating and composed himself for sleep.

All down and the camp silent, the white men crept back up the hill to the near vicinity of their horses, where they could confer with safety.

What to do was a puzzle. Arollo urged that they should mount, slip down the cañon and stampede the Indian pony herd, as the worst blow the pair of them could hope, single-handed, to

strike them, or else that one should undertake the stampeding of the ponies while the other remained above the camp on the chance of potting a few warriors, and then making a safe get-away on his horse.

But this crude strategy did not appeal to Fountain, for while the setting the band afoot, obviously, must cause them serious immediate embarrassment, it was sure to be no more than temporary, for in those days the tribes always had heavy reserves of ponies hidden away in one or another of their home camps in the hills.

Plainly this party was out to strike a serious blow somewhere. But where? At the overland travel along the old road that crossed the Jornado del Muerto, or at the Mexican settlements bordering the Rio Grande? If their intentions could be learned, it might be possible to balk them. At any rate, could he fathom their plans, the nearest cantonment of troops could be advised.

If the Indians' plan was to strike the settlements around Valverde, then the little garrison at Fort McRae, located at the Ojo del Muerto in the Caballo Mountains, must be notified, to stand any chance of either heading them off or of a successful pursuit; if, instead, they were planning a descent on the *placitas* above Doña Ana and below the Big Cañon of the Rio Grande, the commanding officer of the troops in cantonment at Mesilla must be reached.

As for the Jornado del Muerto, they might attack the travel on the old Chihuahua-Santa Fé

trail that crossed it at almost any point with equal chances of success, for of the entire ninety-mile stretch without a single drop of sweet water, almost every step of the way led through a nearly unbroken succession of natural ambushes — from which fact, and the absence of water, this vast plain got its name, the Journey of Death, having been so named by the Spaniards away back in the sixteenth century, when they found it almost impossible to get a column across it without a heavy toll in deaths from thirst and the perpetually harrying tribesmen.

And yet avoid this road none could whose journey led him north or south. To the east lay the arid fastnesses of the Oscuro Range; to the west the equally dry Caballos, and the Big Cañon of the Rio Grande.

Perhaps no road in the world has been marked by such disastrous ambushes, notwithstanding the plain is never more than slightly undulating and for wide areas is even level as a floor, while it bears no growth taller than the short, curling grama grass.

But the ranges to east and west of the Jornado del Muerto are purely eruptive, and in ancient days some eruption, probably that which created the ranges themselves, blanketed the plain from end to end with a flow of lava, ten to twenty feet in thickness.

Then, later, came a convulsion of the earth's crust that compressed into great folds this vast field of lava and ultimately broke these folds

asunder. To-day they stand out of the surface of the plain in great ledges, sometimes running many miles in length, and five to twenty feet in height. Thus they form prodigious natural *trincheras,* under shelter of which an army corps could be extended in line of battle.

It was through mazes like this, or parallel to and within a few yards of long reaches of continuous ledges, that the road ran. The straight ledges could, of course, be fairly well scouted by an advance guard, but against ambush at deadly short range in the passages through the mazes no safeguard was possible.

This was the problem that Lieutenant Fountain and Juan Arollo confronted, plainly impossible of solution except by following the band. That would be a dangerous undertaking, since wide reaches of level plain had to be crossed, where from any crest horsemen would be visible miles away. But follow the Indians they must, until their objective point could be determined, and then make a dash for the nearest post, be it Fort McRae or Mesilla. It was the only chance of checking the savages' design, and the scouts were not long in reaching a mutual agreement to take it.

Since God alone knew what tests of endurance both men and beasts must encounter the following day, the horses must have food and the men rest. So they muffled their animals' hoofs in strips of blanket cut from their saddle cloths, and led them back farther into the hills until they

found a small open glade where they could soon get their fill of the juicy mountain grasses. Then, passing into the shadows of the heavy timber that surrounded the glade, one man slept while the other kept an alert watch.

Thus the chill mountain night passed without incident, until, when the stars told of the near approach of dawn, Fountain roused Arollo and told him to saddle their mounts, and then stole back down toward the spring and concealed himself in a good position to observe the enemy.

As dawn was breaking the Indian's night guard brought the pony herd clattering up the gulch, and quickly the camp was afoot. No time was wasted feeding.

Immediately mounts were saddled, slender packs adjusted, and the warriors mounted; when, each gnawing a chunk of the cold meat cooked the night before, the band filed off down the gulch, ghastly grey figures that looked in the half-light like savage spirits risen from their graves for a haunt of their ancient war trails.

Fountain returned to Arollo, and they brought their horses down to the spring. Then down the gulch on the heels of the Navajos they proceeded, Arollo two hundred yards in the lead, afoot, Fountain following with the horses; for there was no telling what rear guard might be lurking behind the column, or what halts might be made. Still, any halt was improbable, for the hurried start and saddle breakfast left it sure they had struck out for a long march.

The sun rose a clear, blazing ball of fire, uncurtained by intervening mists, as usual in those arid high altitudes, warrant of a blistering day notwithstanding the season was early autumn. Downward they plodded.

Gradually the cañon widened and the hills sunk to ever lower elevations, until now and then they began to catch glimpses of the plain below and of the glittering hill crests of the White Sands, a long strip running north and south through the sear yellow grama.

For several hours they were out of sight of the quarry. But when at last the trail left the cañon at a point where it wound away into the south and bore straight westward across the summit of a lofty outpost of the range, far out on the plain below them a column of dust located the position and progress of the Navajos.

There Fountain and Arollo stopped, and waited until the band was well within the hummocky belt of the White Sands, when, sure their dust could not be seen, they galloped forward without a break until they themselves had entered the shelter of the Sands.

Then forward through the Sands they ploughed, distressing heavy going for their horses, finally reaching the westernmost outposts of the sand hills and again sighting the Indians, and still marching straight on into the west.

And thus for hours they plodded on, hanging back within shelter when only naked plain lay before them, galloping their best to make up lost

distance whenever intervening lava dikes permitted, over a low pass in the Oscuros and out upon the Jornado del Muerto.

High noon came at last, and even ruthless savages must give their mounts rest or get set afoot. So their pursuers were not surprised, although pleased enough, when from a crest they could see that the dust column which had been their "pillar of cloud" had disappeared, and in its stead they were able to dimly discern a black blotch upon the plain that, remaining motionless, indicated that the Indians had halted and unsaddled for midday rest. Dismounting, separating, they advanced at a foot pace to avoid kicking up a dust until they had come within two miles of the Indians, when they, too, off-saddled in a shallow swale and stretched themselves for the hour's halt, or more, they knew the Indians were sure to make.

So far they were coming on famously and made sure they would soon be able to fathom the enemies' plans.

Tired of their night's vigil, both stretched comfortably on the ground and fell silent.

And both, as it turned out, dropped off in a doze — a doze that upset all their contrivings for the discomfiture of the Navajos and came near costing them their lives.

Presently Fountain was awakened — by he knew not what. Lying half conscious, directly his ear was attracted by a low rhythmic crackling, and he lay wondering whatever the sound could

be for a time, all senses dulled, without suspicion of its terrible significance.

But when, shortly, a thick cloud of smoke swept over him, he sprang to his feet and hurried toward his comrade — to find a wide line of fire sweeping upon him, swiftly driven by the wind!

A prairie fire, the last worst thing that could have happened to them, Arollo had unwittingly started by the fall into the dry grama grass of his lighted cigarette, released by his sleep-numbed fingers!

Their game was up. Doubtless the Indians were already riding toward them, full tilt, and their chance of escape was reduced to a matter of seconds.

And as they threw on their saddles, both agreed that their only hope of escape lay in making a hard run straight north, by which they might circle round the Indians, to the westward, and reach Fort McRae, at the Ojo del Muerto.

Both well knew that they could not hope to win by more than a neck, for to the north of them the longest straight lava ledge on the Jornado ran due east and west, without a break, impassable to horsemen except at one point for more than ten miles. They must either swing around and past the Indians to the south of the barrier or must make the pass where, through a clutter of great boulders, a led horse could pick his way.

Quickly they were in the saddle and spurring away into the north. And none too soon, for at the first lofty roll of the plain they crossed, a

glance back showed them a score of Navajos lying low on their horses' withers, heels kicking and quirts plying mercilessly at every jump, headed for the smoke they were leaving, and a scant half-mile from it.

There was no such luck as that they should be permitted to cross the ridge unseen. The Indians discovered them the moment they were lashing across the crest, and the band quickly swerved. But, oddly it seemed to Fountain and Arollo at first, not in direct pursuit of them. Instead the Indians headed across their rear.

Was it a move to try to turn them back on the main command, or to make it impossible for them to turn the east end of the ledge? And what was the main band doing? Had it detached another force to bear up to the west of them?

On they rode at the top speed they dared put their horses to and yet save them for the long pull they knew they would have to make. Had the pursuers who had swung round their rear to the east of them ridden directly after them, it seemed certain they must have been overtaken in the first three miles, for, notwithstanding the wide détour necessary to their manœuvre, they had materially reduced the intervening distance.

It soon became perfectly certain that at the first glimpse of the smoke the Navajos had jumped to the conclusion that it must be the work of a small patrol of troops, who would realise they could not expect to escape to the south, and who, the moment they learned they were being pur-

sued, would be sure either to strive to turn the east end of the barrier, toward Fort Stanton, to race north to and through the gap, or to swing west and try to make Fort McRae, at Ojo del Muerto.

With savage cunning they were carrying out manœuvres almost certain to checkmate them. Through the broken country on their west, one band was undoubtedly racing straight for the gap, and another must be following more leisurely on their right flank.

The blazing hot afternoon wore on. Pace of both pursued and pursuers slackened, for no beasts could long continue at their top speed in the heat and across the sandy reaches of the Jornado. Indeed, toward evening Fountain and his companion began to take heart, for they were steadily gaining; in the long spurt to gain their right flank, evidently the Indians had ridden the heart out of their mounts.

The ominous black wall of the lava ledge now loomed plainer at each hard labouring bound of their panting horses. Turn eastward they could not, for that would be to lose to the pursuing party the distance they had gained and mean a finish fight with no better cover than the perpendicular wall of the ledge to protect their rear. Turn westward for Fort McRae they dared not; their mounts were too near done.

On and on their worn horses unsteadily plunged, no more spring in their pasterns, drawn of flank, breath coming in short, agonised sobs. At any

instant one of the now momentary stumbles might bring them to earth for good.

As the sun sank behind the purple summit of the Caballos the band on their right swung into more direct pursuit of them.

The short twilight faded apace. Would the gap in the ledge never be reached? Or had they been crowded to the west of it by the band? Certainly they must have missed it, for now they had been pushing west parallel with the basalt wall for a good twenty minutes.

But, finally, just as the blue-black night of the high plateau enshrouded them, to their joy they distinguished a deep nick in the horizontal wall that, as they advanced, showed the boulder-strewn slope that left no doubt it was the gap they sought.

Here, indeed, was the gap. But did it hold for them death or safety? If unoccupied, they could hold it against their enemies as long as their ammunition lasted. But if occupied their doom was sealed.

Could the Indians have won through to it ahead of them? Difficult, but possible. True, not once had they caught a glimpse of movement to the west of them. But this fact to them was an ominous rather than an encouraging sign, for they well knew the enemy was much too wily to have left their west flank uncovered.

Come what might, the gaining possession of the gap must be attempted; within a few minutes their horses must go down, and then it would re-

main only a matter of minutes until their pursuers were upon them.

At the foot of the tiny pass they dropped off of their trembling horses and drew their pistols. They advanced up the steep slope, leading their mounts, winding and twisting their way through the sand that had sifted in between great boulders strewn so thickly that they were scarcely able to work the horses through them.

Three-fourths of the way up the ascent, on the right lay a deep but low recess, sheltered from fire from the opposite wall. If they could reach it they should be able to hold it until starved out — and there was a chance the Indians would starve out first for water.

Caution in their advance was useless. If the pass was occupied, it was out of the question to get through undetected.

So on up they plodded.

Then it all came in a second. Coincidently with the volley the Indians poured upon them, upon each sprang a pair of lancers. Fountain accounted for his brace before they got within striking distance, but Arollo was less fortunate. He failed to down his second antagonist until he had received a lance thrust through the lung that dropped him.

While his left shoulder was broken by the first fire, a shot that nearly knocked him down, Fountain sprang forward over their horses, struggling in their death agonies, to the aid of Arollo, just in time to drop a fifth warrior who was leaping

forward to finish him. But in the very instant he fired, a violent last kick by Arollo's dying horse broke his leg and sent him rolling within the recess both had been praying they might reach.

No sooner did Fountain realise the mixed lot of harm and help the horse had handed him, than, quickly reloading, he painfully dragged himself within reach of Arollo, firing at random as he advanced to keep the enemy under cover, and seized his mate and drew him beneath the shelter. Meantime, Arollo had fainted from loss of blood.

There beside his unconscious companion sat Fountain, his pain-racked frame backed by the rear wall of the recess, weakening fast of his wounds, but struggling manfully to resist a loss of consciousness from which he well knew there was small chance of awakening.

Nor was his desperate fight to maintain an alert guard against surprise without reward. Twice, at long intervals, encouraged by the unbroken silence of their quarry, a slender shadow came slowly worming along the sand toward the entrance and both finished alike, as an added barricade of his front.

At last toward morning, when nearing lapse into that indifference to consequences of which the freezing permit themselves to fall asleep, Fountain's ear caught a distant sound. Could it be? Yes, it could be nothing but the rhythmic beat of the hoofs of a troop of cavalry, advancing at a sharp trot and in close column.

Heard for a moment during the brief passage

of a dry watercourse, he nevertheless could not be mistaken; the loose order of no movement of mounted Indians could so nearly duplicate that sound as to deceive trained ears.

Silence ensued for no more than five minutes, perhaps, although it seemed to him five years, and then again he heard the sound plainer — nearer.

Was their approach accident? Or had they rightly marked down his position by the firing? Surely not the latter, as for more than two hours the silence of the dead that lay in front of the recess had reigned around him. He must take no chances on his own account or theirs. The troop must be ignorant of the presence of the two score or more Navajos, who lay in ambush around him and near to the line of march along which they were advancing. He must warn them.

Three times he fired his pistol at five second intervals; waited ten seconds and then fired three times, again with five second intermissions, in the hope the regularity of the fire would be recognised by them as a signal of soldiers in distress.

And that it was so recognised he soon had evidence, for again the stillness of the night was broken by the sound of hoofs, now crashing at a gallop across another ribbon of shingle.

From above and to right and left of him he now heard the sibilant hiss of soft Navajo voices counselling in low tones for a few seconds; then, he thought, the faint rustle of movement all around him, intangible as a flight of spirits; then the beat of the hoofs of Indian ponies, racing away to the

north. Then again, and for the last time, the rhythmic thunder of galloping cavalry.

With his last remaining wisp of will, Fountain once more pulled the trigger of his pistol and then dropped unconscious across the body of Arollo, not to awaken until the scouting troop that was bringing them in was nearing Fort McRae.

— VII —

THE DESERTER

MY company was stationed at Fort Stanton, on the upper Bonito in New Mexico, from March, 1863, to the spring of 1864. Major Joseph Smith, our first captain, was in command. Our company officers were E. B. Frink, captain; Thomas Chapman, first lieutenant, and William M. Higdon, second lieutenant, who, like the majority of our men, were old California miners.

It was while at Fort Stanton that I met famous old Kit Carson. The one thing Kit loved next to an Indian fight was to get a crowd about him and spin yarns.

Many were the bitter winter nights, when the snow lay so deep in the gulches of the Sacramentos, of El Capitan, and even along the foothills that the Indian ponies were so nearly starving that the Navajos were forced to sit tight in their lodges and give settlers and overland travel a rest, that we crowded around the big fireplace in the sutler's store, listening to Kit.

Notwithstanding his lifelong rough experiences as trapper, trader, Indian fighter and scout, it was a sterling sound character old Kit preserved. This

was constantly cropping out in his yarns; the old fellow seemed always picking them to point us youngsters a moral of some sort, usually in relation to the service.

With his low, quiet voice and thin, stern face, the boys used to call these yarnings "Kit's preachings," but all the same they never lacked interest that held us as long as it suited him to talk.

One night he began: "Boys, a man ought to study a plenty before he enlists to fight for Uncle Sam; and, once enlisted, if he finds the discipline galling him and gets to thinking about jumping it, he sure ought to keep a studying it over until he gets himself convinced that a deserter is a bigger d—d fool than a loco horse — and I reckon all of you sabe how a loco goes tangling his feet up and rooting grass with his nose every time he tries to move sudden.

"Just the same with the service. The sanest and straightest man that ever marked time never got the deserting bee in his cap and nursed it till he got enough stuck on it to follow it off, that contrived to keep sense enough to pick bugs with the chickens.

"Fact is, it's a worse break than running off another fellow's saddle horses or robbing his traps or sluice boxes, which hurts only the one fellow whose stuff you've got, whereas deserting is an offence against every last citizen of this big bunch of states and territories you have sworn to serve. Never heard tell of one that didn't go rotten bad and keep right on getting worse until

some proper patriot come along and put his light out.

" It's mighty seldom an officer goes loco that way, luckily, but when he does you can always gamble that, much quicker than a private, he'll go mangy as a starved wolf gets in the spring and as little particular of the carrion he gnaws.

" Plenty of young ones get the monte or the poker bee and just blow up duplicating their pay accounts to try to win back their losses; lots of them set their traps to snare all the rot-gut whisky the sutler can get hauled out from the Missouri, and wind up losing their shoulder straps.

" But even such I've known to steady down to an honest man's gait, and keep it. Just let an officer desert once, though, boys, and you can take Kit's word a brand new outlaw is ranging the country that will never quit till he is planted.

" It was back in the fifties we had in the Second Dragoons a specimen of this sort that shone like a new Hawkins rifle, a West Pointer, too.

" At that time the Second was serving at Fort Union. I was the scout and guide of the post. A cleaner, straighter youngster one could not ask to meet than Second Lieutenant ——, assigned to troop B. But from the start he had his troubles. B Troop was made up of the human refuse of the overland Independence-Santa Fé trail.

" All kinds came or got pushed along that old trail; and while few hit it in those days that were not as full of fight as a trapped grizzly, a plenty there were whose only idea of hard work was a

slick sneak of somebody else's horses, dust or goods.

"Courts weren't thick in those times, of course, but Judge Lynch and his posses soon put the bad ones of the new camps on the run. Many a one found temporary asylum in the army, shifting base and enlisting at distant posts. And it was a lot of such thieves and hold-ups that our young lieutenant got assigned to the junior command of.

"The discipline of the frontier forces was pretty loose — rightly enough, too. Drill didn't help much in the rough work against Indians, and the older officers realised it.

"But our lieutenant, fresh from the regulations and iron-clad rules of West Point, came near going plumb loony in his effort to whip his unkempt, slouching, drunken and disorderly troop into proper regulars.

"He was at them morning, noon and evening, drilling and marching, until he had them near ready to break out into open mutiny.

"'Dandy' and 'Toy Soldier' were about the only names they had for him that I care to mention. But, curiously, in time the men dropped into the spirit of the work themselves — sorta got stuck, I reckon, on the superiority of their drill over all the other companies at the post — until most of them were about ready to eat out of his hand.

"Just about then, however, when he must have been thinking his troubles were double-quicking to

the rear, he got it good and hard from an unexpected quarter.

" Every week his own troop had been growing smarter and smarter, and the other soldiers, jealous perhaps, or fearing the example was likely to start their troop officers making them pound the parade ground on all-day drills, got to cursing him worse than his own men had.

" They managed at last to lash themselves into such bitter hatred of him that it only needed a chance to show itself openly in some raw form.

" And that chance came when, one night, a detachment of one of the other troops which had been off on a scout returned to the post, tired, dry, and out of humour. Before mess call they had succeeded in tanking up to a point that ought to have satisfied them, for it didn't take many slugs of that sutler's whisky to put a soldier in the disposition to slit the throat of his own daddy, mad as a snake-dancing Zuñi medicine man. But that night what they had seemed to just give them a good running start.

" Taps sounded, and regulations called for everybody in barracks and all lights out. Shortly after taps, therefore, our young lieutenant, who happened to be the officer of the day, was outraged to see a trooper entering the sutler's store. Following the man in, he found an old dragoon of one of the other companies urging the sutler to sell him several bottles of whisky.

" Promptly the lieutenant ordered the man to his barrack, in arrest. Instead of obeying, how-

ever, the man drew his pistol, covered the lieutenant and insolently growled:

"'Here's where we get our whisky or you get what's been a long time overdue coming to you, you d—d little brass mounted imitation of a real sure enough dragoon! Been laying for a chance like this, several of us. Now you just cut yourself loose and see if you can *make* me go to barracks!'

"Pale with rage, the youngster drew his sabre and thrust savagely at the man; but the wily old dragoon deftly parried the thrust, and snapped his pistol in the lieutenant's face.

"Three times the plucky little terrier so jabbed at the mutineer, was parried, and remained with his pelt unpunctured only because the pistol continued to hang fire. The fourth try got him, though; at the boom of the old pistol, he dropped.

"Luckily for the youngster, I was just entering the door of the room they were in, and jumped on the soldier and disarmed him as he was bending to finish the job with the butt.

"The lieutenant we found unconscious, his face streaming with blood. The bullet had ploughed a crease through and across his scalp that made him look like the whole top of his head was gone. Just as a matter of form, we packed him over to the hospital tent, where, after an examination, the surgeon allowed he was dead.

"No time was lost. Quickly a court-martial was organised and the man was placed on trial. The questioning of a couple of witnesses, the sutler

and his clerk, did the trick, for of course there was no defence: the man was condemned to be shot forthwith.

"Weirdest execution I ever heard tell of, was that one. Notwithstanding it was past midnight when his court-martial was finished the 'Assembly' was sounded, the entire garrison turned out and formed.

"Horse and foot were drawn up at parade rest, the cavalry on two sides of a hollow square, the infantry on a third side, and the condemned was placed midway of the square, facing the infantry.

"Two big fires, fed with fat pine knots, lighted the three long lines of serious faces, those of the youngster's own dragoons fierce-eyed as cornered pumas, faces blazing with resentment, every last man of them looking liable any minute to take a whack at his slayer.

"The other troops, that had been cursing him, seemed to be studying mighty hard over the fix their partner had shot himself into.

"A firing squad of his own dragoon comrades was lined up in front of the prisoner.

"While they were marching into position, the surgeon's orderly came running from the hospital tent hollering for a stay of the execution, but the wind was howling down the Pecos Valley out of the north, like it was in one hell of a hurry to get to the Gulf, and none of us heard him until it was too late.

"But barely had the ordered fire sputtered feebly in the roaring gale, and the prisoner fallen

with five bullets in him, than the orderly reached the major's side with advice from the surgeon that the youngster's skull was no more than creased, and that he would recover!

"D—d bad mess, of course, but it could not be helped.

"When he got up and about, the lieutenant mighty near threw cat fits over the affair; said he had been too hasty, ought to have called the sergeant of the guard, which he had; talked of resigning, which it's a pity he didn't. Older officers didn't blame him much, though, for the offence was of the grossest and his life was threatened.

"Shortly he got so morose and brooding that, I reckon, the major allowed it would do him good to get out and have a whack at the Navajos, for he ordered him to take his troop and patrol the road north beyond Puerta de Luna, as far as the Cañon de los Enterros.

"So out and on up the Pecos he marched, scouts well ahead and off on each flank, trying to spot some war party he could surprise and cut up. But nothing showed up. The lower road was deserted, both of travel and of the human wolves that usually lurked along it.

"Up Enterros, though, the Navajos turned the tables on his plans. There a war party of four hundred lay hidden up a deep side gulch out of sight of his scouts, and when he turned the point of that gulch down they came on him, hell-a-tatilt, no more than three hundred yards distant when they were first sighted.

"The little *teniente's* troop only numbered ninety men, but he was game; returned the compliment, galloped straight through the bunch in solid column of fours, scattering them like quail dodging a hawk. It was pistols and sabres against lances and muzzle-loaders, or those dragoons, to the last man of them, would have been turned into crow meat that morning.

"For the surprise handed them by a little bunch they allowed to eat up the first clatter, the Navajos put up a great fight. They rallied, and that by the time the youngster could wheel, reform and smash back at them.

"Twice he so split them apart, like an axe splits a backbone, leaving many a struggling pony and writhing buck flopping on the ground, like a turkey you've nipped the head from with your 'Hawkins.'

"But the fourth round, the little lieutenant tumbled out of the saddle with four bullets through him.

"Quick as they could his men sought to rally round him, but he only called up to them:

"'Back at 'em, boys, don't mind me; back at 'em!' he yelled. 'Hold the field and save your wounded!'

"Pretty little pack of ravening wolves that talk turned them into, and at it again they pelted, sabres shearing lances and gnawing bones with a hearty hunger that soon had the befeathered devils on the run and left the wreck of the dragoon troop victors.

"About a third of the men were down, but the two-thirds left, I reckon, must have looked like a regiment to the Navajos.

"Three months later when the lieutenant recovered sufficiently to resume his lighter duties, one evening before parade his men lined up at 'attention,' himself, pale and weak, leaning heavily on a crutch, he addressed them:

"'Men, I have heard you called every bad name a reckless man could lay his tongue to, and I suppose I'll have to admit I have called you a few myself, but if after this anybody calls you cowards in my hearing, he will have me to fight, for I know you to be as brave a lot as ever drew sabre.'

"Forgetting discipline, one of the troopers shouted: 'Three cheers for our little game-cock, and it's up against the devil himself we'll follow him!' And wildly the troopers cheered, and cheered again.

"And it was most sadly this vow of his troopers soon came to be fulfilled, all too literally. Had Captain ——, for shortly he was promoted to captain for the Enterros affair, stuck to his trapping, he'd be with us in the service to-day high in command — a brigade at least, if not an army corps.

"What came over him, God alone knows. Probably it was the injury to his head that night at the sutler's store. Anyway, we all liked to think so — and it would not have been healthy for any outsider to suggest anything else.

"At all events the fact is that from week to week he grew more sullen and morose, drank deep all by his lonesome, stuck close to his quarters and met with scant courtesy and never with cordiality such of his brother officers as called on him and tried to cheer and brace him up.

"Looked like he just naturally went bad all through — got a 'bad heart,' like a Navajo buck gets now and then, and has to turn out by his lonesome, if none will follow him, and plunder and kill.

"Finally, I reckon, it hit him so hard he could stand it no longer, for he went in and got permission of his commanding officer to take his troop on a two weeks' scout to the west of the post. Evidently, it appeared later, he had schemed out the extra long scout on purpose to get to draw a heavy supply of rations and ammunition to make his jump on.

"Whether he had taken his men into his confidence remained only a matter of guess work, of course, but I am myself thinking he did not spring his scheme on them until he had them out in the field — too much danger some of them would get drunk and let it out.

"The two weeks of his detail passed, and then another week, but no word came of him. Then we all concluded he must have been wiped out, and the commanding officer sent out a search party.

"And it was a strange tale we found hard to credit they brought back; that they had followed

his trail to a little spring well to the north of El Capitan, a straight jump without a stop that must have kept them humping a full day and night.

"Thence his sign bore up above the old Gran Quivera ruins, headed on a bee line for the Rio Grande, where it would strike the stage road midway between Valverde and Santa Fé, and along it they followed him for fourteen hours without any show of a halt, when the leader decided to return and report to Fort Union.

"It was incredible, but either the man had gone mad as a sun dancer or else had deliberately deserted. There was no other explanation. So after three weeks of uncertainty as to which it might be, we were not so greatly surprised when a mail from Santa Fé brought news that Captain ——, with his entire troop of dragoons, had turned bandit!

"They had been shooting up Mexican *placitas* in the valley and levying *prestamos* on their merchants, holding up stagecoaches for money and valuables and *conductas* of freight for food and supplies; cruel, pitiless, insatiable, sparing none.

"Long after we heard that his band, constantly harried and hunted, dwindled rapidly, but that with the remnant he went on scourging into the north, swinging to the west of Santa Fé and on through Taos and the San Luis Valley. In the wilds of the mountainous region, about the head of the South Platte, he found refuge when not raiding the rush of gold seekers then pouring into California Gulch.

"Ultimately, he was captured, of course. Jailed in a little Colorado camp called Rosita, soon the local vigilantes took his pelt and hung it up to dry, but were so careless in their work that the pelt retained little value.

"His crimes were so atrocious and he was so bitterly hated that hanging was held to be too merciful, and the vigilantes made him run the gantlet, to be hacked and shot till he fell.

"While ranging the trails and holding up coaches, it had been his practice to blacken his face, like an Indian brave blackens his when his heart gets 'bad' and he goes out to kill, which won for him the epitaph: 'He came into the world white, but left it as black of face as of character.' All of which goes to show you, boys, what a mighty poor paying job deserting is."

Threw a bigger chill into us, did old Kit, than a north wind whipping down through the pines from the top of El Capitan.

To be sure, there were mighty few in our column not in it for the love of the game, few with any more disposition to quit it than a lad loco over his first girl.

But discipline had been eating saddle galls into some of us, and Kit's yarn sorta buffaloed us and set us toeing the mark better, until Christmas, when A Troop came near marching into arrest in a body.

In practice, if not by nature, a sutler is a skinflint no soldier loves, and no chance to even things with him goes long neglected.

Then, besides, it needed all the combined resources of our ingenuity to contrive a feed that would be likely to beguile one into a suspicion that it was a stagger at a Christmas dinner. It must be a departure from the monotony of regulation rations, of which we had grown ghastly tired — hardtack and bacon and meagre issues of beef.

To be sure the hills were full of deer and wild turkey, but we were not allowed to go out after them, for that the Navajo hunters were constantly prowling about was proved by the fact that it was the exception for one of our wood parties to return without casualties.

And besides, a fortnight earlier, two A Troop men, John Hinkley and Justice Wagoner, had been killed at Guiana Springs, while carrying despatches to Santa Fé, and the quartermaster's mule herd had disappeared for good behind a yelling line of blanket-swinging Navajos.

Thus the company heart was overflowing with joy and the company mouth with jest when the company wag and wiseacre divulged a plan to garnish our Christmas dinner with a delicacy to be foraged from the sutler's preserves.

For a long time he had been fattening a lot of pigs, on corn we well knew to be filched from the quartermaster's stores, with what connivance does not matter but at all events to the robbery of full rations for our mounts.

So it seemed to the moralists of the company that we would be doing Uncle Sam a service if we should contrive to turn to the benefit of his sol-

diers what had been intended for but robbed from his troop horses.

Just how it happened I cannot say, for company ways are always dark and mysterious, but the facts are that six fine shoats were roasting in our Dutch ovens on Christmas Day before the sutler discovered his loss and traced it to the camp-fires of A Troop.

Jolting himself every jump with a new explosion of lurid expletives, the sutler flew to the quarters of the commanding officer. But when presently the Major approached, accompanied by our company officers and the dancing sutler, the pig meat had been transferred to mess pans and shoved into the *horno,* a big permanent bread oven we had copied from the Mexicans, where it continued steadily cooking, while the Dutch ovens on our camp-fires had been refilled with beef.

"What's the Christmas dinner cooking, Sergeant?" asked the Major.

"Beef, sir," replied our orderly sergeant.

"But, Sergeant," the Major said, "the sutler has come to me with a charge of theft against A Troop; says you've been stealing his pigs."

"Can't be, sir," our good old sergeant bluffed. "Shall I have the quarters searched, sir?"

"But the sutler says the pigs are now roasting on your fires; lift the lids of those pots, Sergeant," sternly ordered the Major.

The lids were duly lifted, one after another, and while he tried to look severe, the Major was choking with laughter as he queried:

" Sutler, does that thin-clad bunch of beef bones look to you like fat pig? That new lot of whisky your wagon train brought in this morning — well, is it going to be safe stuff for my boys to drink if it's knocked you cross-eyed like this already? "

Then our captain chipped in about the outrage it was to lay a charge of robbery against as fine a lot of men as his, and dropped a hint he was likely to take it as personal to himself. The result was very satisfactory all round, except to the sutler.

Thus at their Christmas dinner that day both officers and men joyously feasted on roast pig.

— VIII —

THE BORDER RUFFIANS

I DOUBT if there is still living a survivor of our old California Gold Brigade who does not feel indebted to the Fort Stanton sutler whose pigs wandered into our Christmas bake ovens.

If he does not feel so, he certainly ought to, and is an ingrate if he don't — for come New Year's it got to be more than pork we owed him for, and if in the way of pay he ever received anything more tangible to stack up and count than experience, I never heard of it.

In fact, I'm willing to bet that our 1864 New Year's Day is the longest New Year's Day on record. It lasted a week without a let-up, and if anybody can substantiate the beating of it, he can break me.

Of course a week is going some in holidays, I admit, and yet it came about simply and naturally enough; don't quite see how, under the circumstances, anything could have stopped it. Anyhow, our officers couldn't.

Probably our major was more directly responsible for it than any one else, although if he had himself realised it I believe he would have ordered

himself into arrest for the remainder of his natural life.

Got us pretty thirsty, did the major, when, on Christmas Day, he told the sutler it must be an overdose of his new consignment of whisky that had made him mistake beef for pork; a hint that it must be full strength and a reminder that he had what looked like an everlasting lot of it.

Especially when, after warehousing his boxed merchandise, the sutler found he had no storeroom left for the whisky, and as the only possible alternative for its protection, grouped the ten barrels in front of his store, and atop of them laid some planks on which, at night, he spread his blankets.

So on guard over the barrels the sutler slept in security until New Year's Eve, for a successful manœuvre to part him from his barrels took some planning. However, during the week some of the boys (I am not saying who, even if it did happen nearly a half century ago) managed to sneak some chloroform from the hospital stores.

And it was by a judicious application of the chloroform that the sutler was spared the physical pain of a tumble off his lofty bed and the mental distress of realising that his spirits were being borne beyond his ken — if not on wings, at least on moccasined feet more noiseless still than wings.

No bones were broken, as far as observed, when, after sneaking his pistol from beneath his head, the boys rolled him off his spirituous perch, but to make sure he should not suffer any, again he

was well soused with the forget-your-troubles water.

And this piece of disinterested charity happened to prove no special hindrance to the boys in their self-assumed task of decanting the barrels and effectively disposing of both them and their contents.

The staves made a bonfire that must have made the Navajos think we were sending up the biggest distress signal fire was ever touched to; the hoops, cooled by a bucket brigade thoughtfully organised in advance, were hidden in the foliage of a giant pine a mile from the post.

The contents of the barrels? Well, what remained after every last non-com and private had laboured faithfully to stow all of it he could where by no chance it could occasion the sutler further anxiety, served to fill every available receptacle for either liquids or solids, except the saddle bags (which it was the general opinion would not be faithful to such a trust), and no pair of boots in the entire camp stood empty that night beside whatever section of the parade ground their owners reposed on.

The next morning, bitterly cold as the deal that had been handed the sutler, the few who had recovered consciousness sufficiently to entertain lucid views on the subject were making even bets on which of the two was the madder, the sutler who had lost his whisky or the major who had quite as effectively, for the time being, lost all control of his men.

The major's loss ran farther, and harder from his point of view, although this feature salved the raw sore of the sutler's sense of injury; more men than I like now to think of, among them good comrades and true, never again answered roll call again, found marble-white and still as the snow that had frozen and shrouded them.

Arrests? Court martial?

How could there be where all alike were culprits, and not a single non-com, much less a corporal's guard, left fit for duty?

Then, besides, of the theft there was not the least figment of proof to fix it upon any one; for while of course everything in camp was full of whisky, the men and all other practicable receptacles that could be depended upon not to waste it, the barrels — well, it was search the zenith for the smoke of the staves of them, or ask the snow birds that nest among the pine boughs that hid their hoops.

Naturally, the officers confiscated and spilled all the whisky they could find; but at the start there had been ten generous barrels of the lot, so that it was for the officers, "guess again; you didn't get it all." Which is why our New Year's Day lasted a whole week.

Relieved by some companies of New Mexico troops, the early spring of 1864 found us on the march down Lost River, past the White Sands and over San Augustine Pass to the cantonment at Mesilla. There we loaded with quartermaster and commissary supplies and proceeded on west to

the Gila, where we had been ordered to establish a new post.

Arriving in May, we cut timber, made adobe bricks and built Fort Goodwin, near where Fort Thomas was later established.

The upper San Carlos River, then for generations past and for many years since, was the favourite retreat of the Apaches, their best loved home camp where their women and children planted and tilled such simple crops as they sought to raise, chiefly corn and chili. And it was to dominate and check them, or push them out, exiles on the move, that we were ordered there.

But it was little enough we accomplished, although detachments were out constantly. Overtake and strike any body of them we could not.

They retired into rugged fastnesses of the higher range where horses could not travel, and no dismounted troops could get within range of them except when they had an ambush laid that usually won toll of us.

They could outfoot anything but a mountain goat, and could make even a goat rattle his hocks.

Our only chance of doing much good lay in getting into communication with them and trying to arrange a treaty of peace. But for this no opportunity offered until, one day, ten of the Apaches came into camp, seven bucks, two squaws and a Mexican woman they had long held captive.

A new officer then commanded us, a Major B——, recently come out from the East; and he.

after placing the others under guard, ordered the Mexican woman to return to their chief and urge him to come in for a council. The woman protested she would be certain to be killed if she carried any such message, but the major told her she could secure her safety by assuring the chief that if harm came to her he would hang the nine prisoners he then held.

Out she started, with the greatest reluctance; and she had gone barely two hundred yards away, lost to sight among the pines, when he had proof not only that she was right but that the Indians must have been scouting the very edge of our camp.

A frenzied shriek brought out a detail of us at the double quick. We found her speared and dying.

And when, a week later, I was ordered from the San Carlos camp back to Fort Goodwin, the nine gaunt hostages were still dangling among the shadows where she fell.

In the autumn of 1864 we were marched back to Mesilla, and there discharged.

Our enlistment finished, Cox and I drifted together again. Dangerous as a running mate though he was, I could not resist a fondness for him, a fascination that warped whatever judgment I had, for as a fearless and reckless but always cool and carefully calculating fighter, he made the gun experts of that rough frontier look like pikers. And, moreover, to me he was never anything but kind and helpful.

We had plenty of money, and for some time ranged through the *placitas* of the Rio Grande valley, loafing a lot, gambling a little, enjoying our release from the galling routine of post and camp discipline.

And as to gambling, of course Cox, past master of all games of chance then known and dealt in the West, could never get his own consent to lose an opportunity to throw a monte card or do a one-handed shuffle of a stack of poker chips.

Nor was he often long lacking such opportunities, for there was more real money drifting up and down the valley then than ever since, the product of Uncle Sam's disbursements on pay-rolls and on quartermaster's certificates for forage and food supplies bought of the natives.

Everybody gambled. And if the truth must be told, there was probably not a single deck in the valley which was not so crooked that not one of its jacks could look one of its queens straight in the face.

So it was always keep your eyes about and shuffle and deal your smoothest or get skinned forty different ways from the ace.

For Cox, at a gaming-table, other people's money was so easy that when he caught another trying to turn the tables he used to resent it, not as a threat of losing money, for which he cared little, but as an insult to his intelligence.

Thus it was no surprise to me that trouble was not long getting busy with us. It happened at the

placita of Rincon, below Fort Craig, during a "bronco baile."

Cox had been invited to open a monte game, and courteously accepted. For some time the game proceeded without unusual incident. That is to say, Cox won steadily, as usual with him.

Presently Cox saw a Mexican covertly slip a monte card from the table, and amiably suggested that if he did not return it the pack would be worthless. The only reply was a string of names which cannot be translated into English.

In an instant the two men were flying at each other's throat, but before they got together other Mexicans grabbed the aggressor, dragging him out of the *jacal*. Seeing which, I stowed the gun I had drawn and grabbed Cox.

As the Mexican was pushed through the doorway, he was swearing he would kill Cox the next time they met. Had Cox been idle at the time, the affair would doubtless have been ended then and there, but the game in progress was not a bad one, and he returned to it.

A fortnight later the pair of us landed at a similar dance, this time at Paraje, where Cox soon had a mob around his monte layout, mostly Mexicans, but including a few soldiers from the post.

Midnight came and passed. The soldiers had withdrawn in a body and returned to barracks, leaving the pair of us alone with a roomful of Mexicans. While Cox was occupied with the game, his Rincon enemy, with six friends, entered

the room and approached the table before we recognised them.

Once we saw who they were, we knew it was only a matter of seconds before trouble would start. And in the instant of delay before the ball opened, an amused curiosity took possession of me to see how easily Cox would handle that bunch by his lonesome.

So I decided not to take a hand until he really needed it or one of the gang should turn on me. But, of course, I was not scratching my head. My off hand kept loafing pretty close to my gun.

As a highly finished piece of workmanship in producing a gun, that Mexican was entitled to be loaded down with as big a jag of medals as one man can tote, for he got the drop on Cox, the only time I had seen or heard of its being done — had his pistol out and stuck in Cox's face before Cox could bat an eyelid.

Had it all his own way for a second. But right then he made the biggest mistake a man with a gun drawn on another can make. He began to *talk*.

If he had only stopped to study a jiffy he would have realised it was up to the other fellow to talk, not to him.

"Told you I would kill you on si—" he began — and ended, for Cox had only been playing him like a trout. While a pistol showed in his belt scabbard, which had fooled the Mexican, another six-shooter lay upon his knees as he sat at table behind his monte layout.

With the second pistol he sent a shot through the table top that rudely interrupted and permanently terminated his adversary's remarks.

As the others, grouped near the door, vanished into the outer darkness, Cox bounded after them. Outside they scattered and shelled him from different directions.

But that did not matter to Cox. Before I got to him he had four more down for keeps. And if just at that moment one of them had not slipped up on his rear and bashed Cox's head in with a pistol barrel, I firmly believe he would have got them all.

That was where I went into momentary action, and to the best of my recollection none of the Rincon gang remained on his legs to carry home news of what had happened.

I impressed a few of the natives to help me pack Cox into Fort Craig, although he seemed to me to be past help. There the surgeon made a successful job trepanning his skull, and set his left arm, which a bullet had broken.

Since the doctor said Cox would be a long time getting up and about again, I drifted down to Mesilla.

There I met a man named Jim Patterson, who was organising a little party to cross the Staked Plains to the ranch of John Chisholm, on the head of the Concho, not far from where San Angelo now stands. His scheme was to buy cattle from Chisholm, drive them out to the Rio Grande, and sell them at the frontier posts.

Myself and five old comrades of A Troop, all of whom were pretty well heeled with money, talked it over and decided the scheme sounded good to us.

News of Chisholm's doings had for some time been the talk of the border. He was the very first of the *Tejanos* (Texans), who, stranded dollarless at the close of the war, awoke to the vast wealth afoot and swarming ownerless throughout southern and central eastern Texas in the form of unbranded cattle. These were the increase of the big open range herds that had run wild and uncared for during the four years of civil strife. Chisholm was the first to begin mavericking the thousands that later made him the cattle king of New Mexico, where he settled on the Pecos River, between the Felix and the Hondo.

Over east of the plains cattle were still worth next to nothing, and if the Comanches or Kickapoos did not get us the chance seemed a rare one to double our little rolls a few times.

The business was no joke, though, for, besides the trouble to be looked for along the Pecos and beyond, the Mescaleros were ranging all through the Diablos and the Davis Mountains.

We therefore decided to go pretty strong, and finished by starting with nineteen men, although nine did not count for much, as they were Confederate renegades who had jumped out to the frontier to escape military service.

We back-tracked the old Indianola trail, the southern branch of it, down the valley to Fort

Quitman, up past Sierra Blanca and Eagle Springs, through the Diablos to Comanche Springs, striking the Pecos at Horsehead Crossing, where we had to tackle the ninety mile march without water necessary to reach Mustang Ponds, at the head of the Concho.

Our journey east was without serious incident other than the hardships to be expected on such terribly long marches without water.

We reached the Chisholm ranch in safety, and ultimately contrived to make a fairly reasonable bargain with its hard-dickering owner, who was to become notorious as the most shifty cow-trader that anybody ever tried to hold to an agreement.

With four hundred fine young steers in hand, we started west, up through the live oaks and rugged cedar brakes that line the upper Concho, and make it as nasty a country to traverse in war times, whether whites or reds are out, as one could persuade himself to travel.

And it was right in there near the head of the river that hell began popping for us a little faster than we could take care of it.

Below, at the ranch, Chisholm had warned us to look out for a big bunch of bandits who, without much trying, had contrived to earn the name of Border Ruffians, led by a Major Bolen.

Composed of the worst elements the break-up of the Confederacy had turned loose along the western frontier, they had been raiding ranches, robbing along the highways, sparing none, but

with a keen preference for Yankees, Chisholm told us.

At the time Bolen had three hundred and fifty followers, a force irresistible in that thinly settled region, and so strong that our only hope of getting through safely with our cattle lay in the off chance their scouts might miss us.

But there was no such luck. Winding through some open glades thickly dotted with live oaks, fire opened on us from all sides, it seemed.

That we were scattered along the line of our travelling herd as we were, was probably all that saved us. Had we been marching in a body, at least half of us would have gone down at the first fire.

As it was, one man was killed and two badly wounded; and, what was worse from the viewpoint of all of us but the dead and wounded, our wild cattle stampeded in every direction.

We scarcely had time even to note in which direction our dollars were racing away from us — never, we well knew, to return.

Cover we must have, and, bunching and drawing our pistols, we managed to shoot our way through the scattered skirmish-line on the north, and to win up into the cliffs; and there, half-way up to the summit, we did hold luck enough to find some big cavelike recesses in the limestone, a shelter that let in our horses, fairly well screened in front by cedars.

It was New Year's Day, 1865, and Major Bolen and his bunch made it their business to turn

it into a far hotter day for us than our New Year's Day at Fort Stanton, and, in a back-handed way, made it last even longer than its predecessor.

Lord! but wouldn't the old Fort Stanton sutler have danced himself to death with joy of our plight if he could have looked in on us — with the Ruffians creeping along under cover to closer range on our front, getting in so close that they might easily have carried us by a charge if they had had the nerve.

Others climbed aloft of our position, rolling boulders down upon us, while part of the band rode off to round up our stampeded cattle.

There we were, cleaned out of all our property in a few minutes, and mighty near bankrupt as well of any show to escape with our lives.

Although the fire never slackened until toward evening, the fact Bolen withheld a charge convinced us he made sure of starving us out for water, forcing us to come out fighting or to a surrender, in either of which alternatives he would be certain to get our arms, all he could expect to get off a bunch that had just blown their combined wad buying cattle.

Of course, he little knew us if he thought we might be driven to a surrender. If the worst had come, we would have dashed out, shooting, even though the odds were twenty to one against us.

The long day wore on. Now and then one of us managed to wing or bore one of the Ruffians, without further casualty on our side.

Naturally there was plenty of counselling among us as the fight went on. Finally, after a powwow among themselves, the nine renegades proposed that, since they themselves were Texans, they should go down under a white flag and try to make a treaty.

We had no objections, for we had found them a lot of curs. In fact, they did not fool us as to their real motive, which was that their surrender as Texans would be received, their lives so be saved, and we might then shift for ourselves.

So, sure of getting on better without them, by the reduction of our party to none but men whom we knew would scrap as long as they could pull a trigger, we boosted their plan.

At the first flutter of their white flag, fire stopped; doubtless they thought they had us. Then down into Bolen's lines the Texans filed. But within half an hour fire on our position broke out again.

Long afterward we learned why. Learning the true character of the renegades after a short cross-examination, Bolen had hanged every last mother's son of them, among the live oaks, for the coyotes they were.

Night came. We redoubled our watchfulness, as we thought it likely they would try to rush us. But apparently they were playing other tactics, tempting us to try for an escape, as not a shot was fired after night fell, although there could be no question we were surrounded.

Our cattle we had heard them rounding up and

bedding down alongside of their camp in the valley beneath us, and through the early evening we could faintly hear their rude jest and revelry over their day's good luck.

But just in the grey of dawn something a plenty redder than his own Ruffians flew up and struck Major Bolen's camp hard enough to satisfy even us.

A small band of Kickapoos, with wild whoops and waving buffalo robes, ran off their horses and stampeded and chased away the cattle, while their main war party opened and maintained a heavy fire on the startled and half-awakened looters.

The Indians had even slipped in between the camp and the detail surrounding us, evidently, for shortly we heard Bolen yelling for them to charge down and take their enemy in the rear.

For a time we fancied that the war-whoops were counterfeits and the summons of our guards a ruse to draw us out, but presently the heavy fire satisfied us that the row below was real enough, and that it offered the only chance we were likely to get of an escape.

So out of our caves we led our mounts, picked our way to the crest of the ridge and along it to open country, and then mounted and hit the best pace we could in a wide circle to the north that should fetch Mustang Ponds, beyond which lay the ninety-mile dry march to the Pecos.

I will not go into the details of that march. Just to think of the suffering it caused us makes

me sick yet. Seven of us reached the river; two of the wounded failed to last through.

But come to the Pecos our plight was pitiable. We had no food but such game as we could kill, and no salt for that; little ammunition remaining; no horses but the exhausted wrecks that had carried us across the plains. And there, lying hidden in the mesquite-thickets that line the river, we had to stay three days, resting beasts and men.

The jump from Horsehead Crossing to Comanche Springs was another forty miles without water, and on it we started shortly after midnight, travelling by the stars.

Daylight arrived, we kept a close lookout, for we were crossing favourite stamping-ground of the Comanches, and, while our horses were again fairly fresh, we had scant ammunition for a fight.

We were not greatly surprised, therefore, when from a ridge that looked out across a wide valley that led up to the spring a long column of at least two or three hundred Indians appeared, trailing tepees and children, bucks and squaws mounted, heading in toward the spring from the direction of old Camp Lancaster.

Instantly we ducked back out of sight and did the only thing we could do — struck an easy lope north toward Phantom Lake, hoping we had not been seen.

Phantom Lake was then known to only one of our party — one of Patterson's men who had there escaped an attack of Indians. A queer place it was, as he described it and as we found it.

At the foot of a low, white limestone cliff lay a deep lake, perhaps seventy-five yards in diameter, fed by a great stream fifteen feet wide and no one knows of what depth, which runs from a cave.

At its entrance the cave has a height above the stream of no more than six feet, but within opens into lofty chambers whose roofs are lost in the gloom and are connected by low, narrow passages.

What the spread of the chambers below water-level may be is matter of conjecture, for catch by the hands on jutting points of the wall and try to reach a footing, and one finds his feet and legs drawn deep in behind the line of the wall. In the first chamber and well to one side, out of line with the entrance, are some broad ledges, or benches, upon which a swimmer may climb.

There are two things about that lake which, doubtless, have served to give it its name. It must be bottomless, for its level never rises, notwithstanding the young river constantly pouring into it; and the chambers within are crowded with millions of bats that, when disturbed by a venturesome swimmer, whirl about awing until the air is fairly solid with them and with a noise that, heard for the first time by one unwarned, which would stampede him into the outer light, never to return, unless the world without held for him greater known terrors than the unknown horrors lurking in the darkness of the cave's inner recesses.

— IX —

THE PLACE OF DEMONS

PHANTOM LAKE, therefore, and the fearsome depths of the caverns that spawned it, promised safe sanctuary to imperilled plains farers bold enough to avail themselves of its shelter.

Our plan had been to water and rest at the lake until midnight, and then strike up into the Diablos in the direction of Eagle Springs, for we had no stomach for the befeathered neighbours sure to be ranging the highlands the next day. But toward night, and when about a mile from the lake, off on our left rear and scarcely two miles away, what should we see but a war party of thirty-odd Comanches, themselves bearing toward the lake, probably on the chance of picking up campers there.

Water we must have, and yet approach the lake we could not without being seen; so we spurred our tired horses to the last burst of speed in them.

And sure enough we had not gone twenty jumps before the party spied us and came lashing on, their ponies so much fresher than ours that they were coming two jumps to our one.

Still easily enough we reached the lake well ahead of them, but only to find it would be as im-

possible for us to hold it as to hope to escape our pursuers by further flight.

The lake and the cave mouth were commanded on all sides from higher ground, and its near vicinity was shelterless. If we tried to give them a stand-up fight, not a man of us would last twenty minutes.

It was abandon our horses, take to the lake and swim up its sluggish current to the ledges Patterson's man had described, or finish right there; for, be the demons of the caverns what they might, to our thinking they were bound to turn out a cheap bunch of tin horns compared to the yelling band that was already dropping lead enough into that lake to make it look like a hailstorm had begun.

So out of the saddle we bounced, packed the roast ribs and joints of venison and wild hog that constituted our only food store, and plunged into the lake. Swimming on our backs and holding our arms above the water as well as we could, we kicked our way into a darkness that I'll bet nothing short of Indians could have driven several of us into.

We proceeded in utter silence, save for the plashing of our heels, until our guide, true to his word, brought us alongside the ledges he had promised us. But right then the horrors hit us.

Alone, I believe almost any man of us would have plunged back into a death by drowning, or capture and torture by the Indians, rather than remain. Cold, clammy bodies we could not see

banged us in the face and were gone; impish claws plucked at our hair and winged away before we could belt them; and all the time a whir of mysterious wings filled the echoing cavern.

I don't believe any of us spoke for twenty minutes after we climbed up on the ledges. All, I dare say, were struggling as I was to master nerve enough to use tongue. I know I felt that if I ventured to open my mouth I should scream.

Presently our guide called in a hoarse whisper, which the cavern echoed again and again:

"Reckon we're safe here, boys; but ain't she hell for unholy?"

"The Comanches are not going to get to eat us up, but I am allowin' it won't be long before *something else* does," answered Patterson; "toughest game to keep your seat in that ever I've played."

After perhaps half an hour of torment the ghosts quit us, flew back, I reckon, to their perches alongside of Old Horny's fires. Fools if they didn't, for it was cold in there as the summit of El Capitan.

Then, the cave silent, we could faintly hear the voices of the Indians, who were counselling, I reckon, about how they could contrive to get our scalps.

The hours passed, goodness knows how many. We had set guards and had long been taking turn about dozing. Night or day was all the same to us in there, for our matches were wet and we were unable to consult our watches.

Finally the guard awakened the sleepers, and we could hear the soft plashing of swimmers. Presently we took heart, for it became certain they were approaching up-stream, and therefore were probably Indians — welcome enemies compared to the winged horrors of the place.

Near to us they came, almost directly beneath where we were waiting, nerve-strung, to smash their heads in with the butts of our rifles, which were no good for anything else in the dark. But just when another stroke or two would have brought them within our reach, our demons of darkness returned into action, bringing, it sounded like, a few millions more of their fellow devils along.

One flutter did the business for that little bunch of swimming Indians; they let off a yell that nearly deafened us, and dove. And, honest, I believe they are diving yet, for it is certain that they could not swim under water far enough to get out of our hearing, and that we heard no further sound of them. Anyway, they were gone — that was the main thing; we didn't care how.

Two days and nights we stayed in Phantom Lake caves, we later learned the time to have been when we got back to the settlements. At the end of that time our food was exhausted, and our dread of the place made anything else preferable. We swam near to the mouth of the caves, where we stopped until our eyes got used to the blinding white light of day.

Then a few strokes took us out into the lake —

to find, as we had figured, that the Indians were gone, convinced that the demons of the cave had not left enough of us to filch a scalp from.

Fast as we could we pushed on toward the Rio Grande, afoot, over the Diablo Mountains and down to Eagle Springs. Famished, footsore and fagged, we made the springs the second night, and fancied ourselves past our worst troubles.

But, warned by past experience, we camped among some boulders that lay on the slope above the spring, and of course set a guard. And it was well indeed we did, for at dawn our two sentries detected shadowy figures creeping up on the camp, and fired, and luckily killed a pair of them.

The year 1865 was certainly starting in bad for us. There we were surrounded for the third time, now by Mescalero Apaches, about forty of them.

But, with our good cover among the boulders and our long-range minnie rifles, they stood no chance of getting to us until our belts were emptied.

None of our few remaining cartridges should be wasted, and therefore the three best shots among us — myself and two others — were to do the shooting.

It turned out rather a quiet, restful day for us, after all, for we soon showed them they could not venture in range of us with their own guns without the certainty of getting punctured.

Near midday a stroke of luck befell us. Four of their little mules, stampeded by the racket of the

firing, ran into our position, and we succeeded in catching them.

While they were pretty thin, it was not long before we were gnawing roast mule ribs, for on our forty-eight-hour forced marching from Phantom Lake through a mountain country usually full of deer we had seen no game.

Finally night came, fortunately overcast. Get on we must, or, our ammunition spent, be certain of a rush we could not hope to survive.

Moreover, well rested and fed, we would have no better chance later. So toward midnight we struck out, crawling and creeping until, to our surprise, we became convinced we had won through beyond their lines. Then we up and humped away our best, rounding the point of Eagle Mountain and getting into cover on the slope of Sierra Blanca by dawn.

For some reason they did not pursue us, probably out of respect for our long-range rifles or, perhaps, of contempt of our poverty of everything except our arms and scalps.

And so, moneyless, ragged and haggard, we reached Mesilla. And it was not until more than a year later, when old John Chisholm tackled the job himself, that any one again undertook to bring cattle across the Staked Plain.

In Mesilla I found my old comrade, Cox, a few weeks out of hospital, entirely recovered, but carrying a bit of metal in his skull nature never put there. But he was all the readier to engage in a promising new enterprise for that, and, wonder

of wonders to me, he was about as nearly strapped of ready dough as I. It was the first time I had ever known him broke.

For just credit of his gaming industry and skill I want to explain that nothing but his wounds could have brought him to such a low financial state.

But we were not without friends, and managed to borrow a couple of horses to carry us down to Paso del Norte, where Maximilian's invasion of Mexico was making lively times along the Chihuahua frontier.

And it was right there our luck turned for the better, temporarily at least. The next day after our arrival we learned that the general commanding the native Mexican forces had been offering one thousand dollars to any one who would carry despatches through to his superior in the city of Chihuahua, with no takers.

That sounded about our size. Both the intervening country and Chihuahua itself were held by the French or their partisans; the road was patrolled. The warfare had been so merciless that neither natives nor foreigners had cared to take a chance of being caught with those despatches and of finishing, blindfolded, before an adobe wall.

But we had a few tricks up our sleeves for the Frenchmen, and jumped at the chance — moseyed away down the Rio Grande until we were below the last settlement, Guadalupe, and then split the desert open. We made a bee-line that proved to be well enough chosen and followed to fetch us

into Chihuahua one dark night, without having seen either the highroad or even a single human being on our journey. And it was by the same route we returned — and took down that useful little thousand.

Our next venture was a bad loser; might have known it would be before we went into it. But I have always thanked my stars we got out of it as soon as we did, for to this day it remains the only downright hold-up game I ever started to draw cards in.

Colonel Latham, an ex-Confederate, was organising a band of thugs for the avowed purpose of circling Chihuahua city and standing up and robbing the French specie train, shortly due to come up from the south.

He had assembled in camp among the cottonwoods below Paso del Norte two hundred of the worst scoundrels the two recently opposing armies had let loose on the Rio Grande border.

Cox and I sat in and drew cards, but we did not last long in that game. To hold the men together the leaders had kept the camp full of *mescal,* a liquor made from the century plant, and about eight out of every ten men were fighting drunk and drunkenly fighting, the bullies forcing all the menial camp tasks on the fainter-hearted.

The very next day after we joined we marched south. In the early evening, while I was watering my horse a short distance from camp, one of the bullies to whom Cox was unknown ordered him to go and rustle firewood.

Cox's answer was a quiet inquiry whether the giver of the order was a fighter. To which the poor fool answered:

"I'm from the Lone Star State; I've got five points to my star, and each one is a fighting point! Square up in front of me, you d—d brass-mounted old blowhard!"

As he talked — for he had made the same fatal mistake of talking so many did in dealing with Cox — he drew his pistol and pointed it directly at Cox. But scarcely were his lips shut on his last word before he fell with a bullet through his heart.

That was one of the lightning plays Cox loved to make, giving a man every advantage of a perfect drop and then potting him.

A friend of the five-pointed conversational gentleman tried to interest Cox — and hit the ground about as hard as his mate.

By the time I got back to camp Cox was gone. That night I, too, slipped away. And, while it may seem incredible, the fact is that no less than eleven men were killed in similar personal rows during the two days we were with Latham's band.

Ultimately he must have whipped them into better order, for they certainly succeeded in intercepting the pay-train, slaughtered the escort, and got the two hundred thousand 'dobe dollars.

Little good did doughty old Latham's enterprise do him. For while they made a safe getaway — slipped through Carretas Pass and on down through Nacora to the Gulf, and safely

crossed to Lower California — burning desert sands became the last resting-place and lazily nodding sotol plumes the only monument of his bleaching bones.

One night a dozen of the gang, headed by a cutthroat named Fairchild, murdered Latham and eight of his men, stampeded all the rest, and made away with the plunder.

And a few months later I heard Fairchild had so nearly cornered all the wine in Frisco that I concluded he had contrived to make way with most of his mates.

Returned to New Mexico, Cox re-enlisted in a cavalry regiment, I in Company E of the First Volunteer Veteran Infantry, which served mounted. And it was in this regiment I won a promotion — none too deservedly, really — that came near costing me my eyesight.

As a matter of fact, it was the slashing fine sorrel bronco I picked to race away from Latham's mad bunch that won me my stripes.

For it was more my horse than I that was considered when I was picked by my captain to carry from Los Pinos to Fort Craig a package — of I knew not what — delivered to me by Quartermaster Dick Hudson.

Important papers, he said they were, and I must make it through between dusk and dawn, to run no chance of being potted by Apaches.

And when, the next morning, after having roused him out of his bed, I delivered my package to the Fort Craig quartermaster, and he asked me

if I knew its contents, and untruly, but inadvertently, I answered "Yes," it was rare good luck for me.

"Well," he smilingly replied, "you are a rare good man in these times; it's not every volunteer of your variegated bunch that could be trusted with nine thousand dollars so near the Mexican frontier."

Back to Los Pinos I made another night dash, carrying a letter for my captain. And when at the dress parade on the evening of my return an order was read to the battalion promoting me to the rank of corporal, for honesty, no one was more surprised than I.

Luckily the limber-conscienced Cox was not along, with knowledge of my trust. Had he been, my arms would never have owned the pride of stripes unless I had beefed him.

But those stripes! It was mixed joy and grief they were to me. For I was near going cross-eyed or plumb blind staring at them — wondering, wondering whatever Miss Bessie McVicker would say to them; whether she'd have the same jeers for the corporal that she was ever overhandy with for the awkward lad in the Michigan sugar-bush.

Ah, me! but the years don't seem to stack up high enough to obscure my memories of the tantalising bush lass who started me on the long scout.

Many were the lithe *señoritas* of the Californian *placitas,* with the eyes and grace of a prong-

horn antelope, that have held me within their lure, but not one, not a single one, have I been able to look long upon before the mischievous face of little Bessie slipped in to blanket her.

My enlistment with the First Veterans I served out, chiefly riding express and escorting the mails across the Jornado del Muerto, in charge of a squad of my company guarding the stagecoach.

Pretty near a man's job was the latter, both in its heavy demands on a man's endurance and on his nerve. As I have previously stated, from the take-off at Doña Ana to Valverde, where the top of the Rio Grande Cañon is reached, is a full ninety miles. And the only living water in the entire distance was at Fort McRae, beside the tiny Ojo del Muerto (Death Spring) in the Caballo Mountains, a wide détour from the direct trail. Crisscrossed by a maze of lava ledges, no equal area of comparatively level plain in the world offers such an endless succession of natural ambush as that through which the old Chihuahua-Santa Fé trail wound, crooked as a squirming snake.

And it was a heavy toll of death the travel of the Jornado paid in those days to both Indians and Mexicans. No scalp was there safe, no matter what one's vigilance.

We lost Dr. Hall one night — shot out of his seat beside the driver before we could get our guns into action. His murderers escaped in the darkness.

At the time we blamed the Navajos; but on the

return trip, camped for the night near the same point, a band of horsemen came riding upon us, and when they paid no attention to my challenge I fired into them, emptied one saddle and stampeded the rest.

My game proved to be a Mexican, as were also, doubtless, his mates. Anyway, whoever they were, they learned it was unhealthy to monkey with my little band.

The truth is I was scared that night, and when I get a good scare on it gets mighty unhealthy for any bad men in the neighbourhood who don't let me alone.

The mail-stage made weekly trips. On one occasion I was ordered out on a scout with my little squad. The next week, there being no spare men in the post, the authorities took a chance and sent the stage out without a guard.

At that time I lay at Fort McRae, resting my worn-out men and beasts from a wide, grilling circle in the Jornado that had only yielded us three scalps.

Fort McRae nestled in a deep gorge of the Caballos, close beside the sweet waters of the Ojo del Muerto. The garrison included only one company of mounted infantry, seventy-five men.

Lieutenant Albert J. Fountain was the post adjutant, quartermaster, and commissary — and also, at the moment, the post commander, his captain being absent at Fort Craig, forty-five miles farther up the Rio Grande, on a court-martial.

And it was cosy quarters Fountain had there,

two rooms circular in form, about fifteen feet in diameter, made by setting cottonwood logs in a trench, the walls so formed being plastered with mud except where loopholes were left, all roofed with a Sibley tent.

The furniture — well, perhaps it would not be so very ardently admired now, but to a field campaigner like me it looked fine, although tables, chairs, and bunks were made of no better than hewn cottonwood dragged up from the valley of the Big River by his soldiers, with a turn of their lariats around their saddle-horns. The bunk and chairs were more comfortable than you might fancy, for they were bottomed with horsehide.

Nor were his diggings bare of ornaments. The walls were hung thick with the trophies of many a deadly tussle that had served to distinguish Fountain as one of the ablest and most tireless, but often too reckless, Indian fighters the California Column produced.

Beside his bunk hung his California saddle, his spurs and lariat; above it his Sharp's breech-loader, canteen, and two Colt's revolvers, the Improved Dragon model.

For the rest, the walls were beautified by a score or more scalps; gaily plumed head-dresses; moccasins, beaded belts and knife and bow scabbards, bows and arrows.

Among the scalps I recognised Mescaleros, Coyoteros, Pinals, and Gilas, all of the Apache race, and a goodly bunch of Navajos — the latter, doubtless, toll he had taken in satisfaction for the

hot grilling run and aching wounds a Navajo war party gave him and his mate the time Juan Arollo's cigarette fired the grama grass.

It was little more than half a day's rest we had at McRae, for in mid afternoon in rolled the stage, come for refuge (for the post lay ten miles off the direct road to Fort Craig), shy two mules, minus its mail bags, and with one of its passengers sporting a puncture of the shoulder.

"Where did you lose your mails?" growled Fountain.

"About twenty miles southeast of here," answered the driver. "Indians got after us, and we had to discharge cargo. Fancy run they were giving us. Never would have shaken them if they hadn't stopped to plunder the bags."

In a second Fountain had his trumpeter sounding "Boots and Saddles," and in ten minutes we were mounted and away. I trailed along, although I believed there was small chance of our striking the marauding band.

Still, the season was that of the late summer rains, August, when for two or three weeks the desert is transformed as by magic into a meadow beautiful and sweet as any the world holds, carpeted with bright green grama grass and wild flowers, when the air swarms with honey bees and the cups of the lava ledges become pools of limpid rain water.

August is the month of all others to watch out for raids by the red enemy, and it was not unreasonable to hope they might yet be lurking along

the stage road, on a chance of the fat pickings the scant overland civilian travel occasionally offered.

It was a swinging lope Fountain led us, for the moist ground spared us the dust columns that made a daylight surprise of the enemy almost impossible through eleven months of the year.

When we reached a protecting lava ledge he made us hide behind it while he himself played Indian, plucked a handful of grass and bound it around his forehead, crept to the crest of the ledge and raised his head until, while only the tuft of grass showed above the rim, his eyes could search out every nook and cranny of the near-by rocks.

Satisfied of a clear front, over the ledge we passed and on we raced.

Toward evening we noted a small train of six wagons creeping down out of the north, apparently bent upon marching on into the night. Shortly thereafter, almost at dusk, Fountain made another reconnaissance and saw a long line of slinking figures crawling into a position that commanded the road.

"Got 'em, boys, got 'em," he whispered when he slipped down to us; "follow me and dodge the boulders."

Dismounted, we followed along the ledge on our right until, at length, we could cross in darkness the break through which the road wound. There we left our horses, circled until well in the rear of the Indians' position, and then we stalked them.

Ah, the joy of stalking men, of matching human cunning against human cunning! How it makes the most thrilling big game stalking look like kitten play! We stalked that band of Indians to within thirty yards, helped, of course, by their absorption in the approaching quarry on their right front.

Something over an hour we held them at short range, the plain silent as the interstellar space above us save for the occasional shrill call of the coyote.

At last we heard low, whispering murmurs in the north, that presently resolved themselves into the groans of axles and creaks of ox yoke bows.

On came the teams, drivers all unsuspecting, no scout out ahead, like men groping blindly at the very door of death.

And so, in fact, they were, for every last man-jack of them was certain to fall the moment they reached the front of the Navajo's position. No men ever strode nearer death and escaped it.

On they came, out of our sight but easily located by the thump of ox feet and the rattle of gear. Then when, at length, their lead team was nearly up to the head of the Navajo's ambuscade, forward we crept another ten yards and rushed them.

Well, those Indians were the most surprised bunch of men, I reckon, since the whale coughed up Jonah.

Our rifles rattled, and then it was in among them with the pistols. It was all over inside of five

minutes, and their survivors were lost in the shadows of the night.

One of Fountain's men got a lance through the shoulder, one of mine a belt over the head with an empty gun. That was all — no dear price to pay for eleven scalps and the gear of their wearers.

The flash-in-the-pan little action over, it took nearly ten minutes of yelling to convince the freighters that they were still safe on the hither side of Jordan and persuade them to stop the random, badly rattled fire they had opened the moment the first gun popped.

All that saved us from injury at their hands was that most of us were covered from their fire behind the rocks throughout the affair.

Of course they were grateful for their deliverance and profuse in their thanks. We brought up our horses, had supper with the freighters and camped there for the night.

Dawn found us up and away, back-tracking the band, on a search for fragments of the mail.

And talk of rural delivery; that was a fancy and impartial one those Indian counterfeit postmen had made. Hardly a sage bush or mud puddle for miles that had not drawn at least one letter out of their shuffle. Few of the letters were torn. The Indians had evidently quit opening them when they found the little packets held nothing but worthless bits of paper scrawled with incomprehensible signs.

But, curiously, all the illustrated papers and

magazines were torn to fragments, their illustrations doubtless having been mistaken for a modification of the crude style of picture-writing the Indians themselves practised.

— X —

AN EVENTFUL HONEYMOON

IT was late in my enlistment that I last met Fountain, and had again the privilege of following him.

A few weeks earlier I had heard, from the gossip of two officers at "stables," that while detailed at Mesilla on a court-martial, he had met a girl from Chihuahua, at a ball of the local quality, whose first glance had served to hobble and stake him at her tent door for all time, and she had returned his fiery attachment, from the first glance, it was said.

And it was a prize, in every sense, that the Mesilla ball yielded the young lieutenant. For not only was she of the bluest blood of Chihuahua, but daughter of an old don whose cattle were numberless.

She was not one of your kittenish sort, the kind that purr themselves hoarse when you pet them, but scratch like furies when by chance their fur is rubbed a bit the wrong way. Instead, she was one of the rare types, the only type of a woman worth tying to, with a *character* and a *temper;* none of your forgivers-and-forgetters, but the sort

that can love as hard as they can hate and can hate like hell.

Fit mate was she for a fighting man like Fountain. Happy the destiny that brought together two such indomitable spirits.

Never a dallier, the moment he could obtain a leave of absence from his commanding officer, off for Chihuahua our hot-foot lieutenant was whipping and spurring, his mission there probably the hardest he ever tackled.

Among Mexicans the memories were still green of the then recent wars that had stripped them of California and of her immense territory extending thence far to the east of the Rockies, territory she had held for nearly three centuries by right of discovery and conquest.

The hatred of Mexicans for Texans in particular and Americans in general was never more bitter than when Fountain crossed the Rio Grande and rode south to win from her father his sweetheart.

But, handy with his tongue as with his arms, winning of way with men as with women, he took the wall of racial hatred at full gallop, swept aside all opposition of the don and his family, and within a week of his arrival was racing back to his post cuddling close to his heart their consent and blessing.

A fortnight before our meeting, he had been married at Chihuahua, a wedding the old don made the talk of the state for years.

Indeed, it was nothing less than the coach of

state, all blazing with gold, that carried the wedded pair from the splendid old iron-grey cathedral to the stately palace where Don Ignacio lorded it like a prince of old Castile; for in hours of need he was altogether the most dependable financial prop of the state. In the formal quadrille that opens all ceremonial balls in Spanish America, it was no less a notable than the governor who led out the bride and Fountain who danced with the wife of Chihuahua's chief executive.

On the long march from Chihuahua to Paso del Norte, nestled among the vineyards and alamos that there have converted a narrow strip of the desert into an oasis as fair as any in the sun-kissed valleys of Andalusia, they were escorted by a troop of Mexican cavalry.

But they had little more than crossed the frontiers, no more than reached Mesilla, before the young bride got a reminder of the rudest of the discomforts and dangers to which she had committed herself as a soldier's wife.

For, his leave too nearly expired to permit of delay for the greater comfort and security of the regular coach and its escort, and always self-confident to the point of sheer recklessness, what did Fountain do but start for his long trip across the Jornado to Fort McRae in a buckboard, drawn by four mules, alone with his wife and a driver.

Madness of the worst, but it was Fountain.

Up through the sandy reaches of the long slope from Doña Ana to the brow of the mesa they

climbed, and on across a dozen or more miles of the Jornado they trotted without incident.

But before they were yet opposite Elephant Butte, Fountain's constantly questing eyes caught a feathery dust column sweeping toward them, from the direction of the river, that could scarcely be anything other than an Indian war party that had marked them by their dust and was racing in pursuit.

He at once put his mules to a gallop. The dust column gained on him. Occasionally, when there came a lull in the prevailing high south wind, he caught brief glimpses of kicking heels, lashing quirt arms, and straining mounts, above a score of them, that left no doubt a race was on which he must win to live.

The southern third of the Jornado holds few of the lava ledges which, farther north, offer such excellent opportunities for defence as well as for ambush.

On the hostiles came, gaining, at every jump on his overburdened team.

Within an hour they had opened fire, and he was throwing back at them an occasional shot. But the range was yet too long for their arms, the tossing, bounding buckboard too unsteady for useful work by even so reliable a shot as Fountain, so no damage was done to either side.

The trouble was that they were constantly drawing nearer — and nearer!

Something must be done, something that would stop the pursuit. In another twenty minutes at

the most, the enemy's fire would be reaching them, ill aimed, of course, but in such a hail they would be sure soon to have a mule down, at least.

And then, great God! No alternative but to shoot his bride and fight them until he fell!

A crisis to paralyse the bravest and most resourceful!

But that little wild one was equal to it!

First he tossed overboard two small mail sacks he was carrying to Fort McRae. Sure enough, two Indians stopped and picked them up, but it was for them only a task of seconds. Meantime the band raced on.

Then he began to throw out their valises, one by one, at intervals. This device worked better, both as lightening load on his team, and as bait to the savages, for as each lot fell two or more stopped, jealous of too rich appropriations by any one, and the valises were too bulky to throw on their mounts and permit of their further immediate participation in the chase.

Thus nearly half of the Indians dropped back out of the immediate chase, but those still remaining were more than he could hope to dispose of single handed.

The pace was killing. The mules were in a lather, although they freshened a bit when lightened of the valises. But Fountain well knew the gait must soon be abated, or down they would go in the harness.

Never had Fountain loved his bride so much, never been so proud of her. From the start of

the pursuit she had not turned a hair, had shown no fear, had scarcely spoken — had left him free to study and work out their safety as best he could.

And yet he knew that she, as a border bred girl, understood only too well the horrors of the death impending.

As the Indians drew nearer, she had cuddled a little closer to him and laid her hand upon his knee. That was all.

But it was enough for Fountain.

Bullets were now falling around them.

His last card must be played without further delay — his ace of trumps, on which alone hung their lives.

Overboard, into the swirling dust of the road behind them, he dropped his trump — *a five gallon keg of whisky!*

Would they stop?

Did they?

They *did,* every last red devil of them reined in as quickly as the half hitch of hair rope around the under jaws of their ponies that constituted their crude bridles permitted; reined up to the keg, bounced off their mounts and pounced upon it like hungering wolves upon a fresh kill!

Then, almost instantly, a knowing as well as a bold player at all Indian games, Fountain took the deadly strain off his team. He pulled down to an easy gallop, and within another mile dropped to an easy trot, at two miles gave them a brief halt.

He knew that it would be slow work digging the hardwood bung out of that oak keg with their knives, and that once the Indians had a taste of its contents not one would leave until the last drop was gone.

And, cunning in more ways than one, but scarcely venturing to hope for meeting help to play the hand out, Fountain had contrived to hold the keg until he could drop it a few yards to the south of where the first lava ledges set in — in other words, near to an easily stalkable position.

After breathing his team a few minutes, on north again he bowled, the mules again at gallop.

And it was shortly thereafter that, travelling south from Fort Craig with my usual detachment as stage escort, I in my turn saw a column of dust off in the south that made me pull up at the next good defensive position, an isolated upheaval of lava with no cover near it.

Of course, the dust might be that of white travel advancing along the road, but the road was so tortuous I could not be sure; and since we had several passengers and a heavy mail, it was better to take no chances.

For nearly an hour we sat watching the approach; and since a heavy wind was blowing out of the south that completely shrouded the makers of the dust, it was not until they had come within a few hundred yards of my position that I made out a racing buckboard.

Then up rolled Fountain, his mules dropping,

as they stood in harness, before they could be freed from the traces.

Briefly he told me the story of their experiences, and then smilingly added: "Got to make 'em pay for the five gallons they held me up for — no, Corporal? Fine stuff it was. Leave two of your men with the coach, come along with the rest, and I'll bet I show you as funny a *fiesta* and altogether the easiest bunch of scalps you ever saw or heard of."

And then, turning to his bride, who had been given shelter from the sun within the coach, he said: "You'll not mind remaining here with the stage, will you, dear? We'll be back early in the evening, you can depend. Nothing to fear; you'll be perfectly safe."

"Too safe whilst thou art in danger; dear, I must go with thee!" she replied.

"But there's no danger," he answered; "still" — turning to me with a quizzical smile —"what do you say to the new volunteer, Corporal?"

"Always glad to find a mount for as fine raw material as this offering, Lieutenant," I grinned. "I bet that on a pinch she'd put up a better fight than the average recruity."

Pleased, as he well should have been to own so stout-hearted a mate, Fountain replied:

"Good, then, and it's two horses instead of one and off we go."

In five minutes we were mounted and away, on a wide circle to the east, at an easy pace that raised little dust.

An hour later, well to the east of the road and counting on the effects of the whisky to dull them of their natural vigilance, we swung back toward the point where Fountain had chosen to dump his bait and plant his ambush.

It was nearing twilight when we crept into the recesses of the rocks that commanded the position.

Beneath us lay a sight never to be forgotten. For some time we had been hearing the "Ho-o-hays!" of their revel; now we saw it.

The loiterers with the jettisoned valises had come up and brought their plunder; that was plain at a glance. Nor had the generous lunch box that also had gone overboard been neglected.

For many yards around the little camp-fire at which they had been boiling coffee, the yellow plain was alitter with the Fountain finery, all of it except such as the members of the band had already appropriated for their personal adornment.

A few of the bucks were stretched full length on the ground, and the rest were dancing furiously around the fire.

It was all we soldiers could do to keep from breaking into screams of laughter at the grotesque figures, although for Fountain and his wife it was anything but funny. She had hardly spoken since leaving the stage until, at the crest of the barrier, slipping between the lieutenant and myself, she nearly cost us a surprise of the band. When she saw the savages tricked out in her wardrobe, hats

and all, she caught her husband's arm, whispering angrily:

"Oh! my God! Death to the demons! Oh! Oh! My blue hat, and the pink one! My grandmother's mantilla! And, look! look! my, my — Oh! I shall die of shame — *don't* look — I've nothing left! All my clothes profaned and ruined!"

Oh, but it was a show! My word for it, but the Chihuahua millinery they had appropriated made them the fanciest lot of war bonnets ever redskins sported, feather plumes tossing and bright ribbons streaming in the evening breeze.

And the rest! Pink silk hosiery on some, blue and red on others! And trousers! Never get an Indian, in those days, into *regular* pants, but the abbreviated style those valises furnished plainly suited them to death, for practically every last one of them was wearing a funny sort none of us soldiers had seen before, a sort that couldn't be much real protection in a cold climate, all covered with bright ribbons and pretties.

But Fountain did not allow us much time to take in *all* of that show, so it is only just glimpses I can recall.

Didn't take him long, I guess, to develop a case of mad about as unforgiving as his wife's; for when we began to "come to" out of the trance her part of the show threw us into, what should we note but that a big, ugly old coffee-cooler, evidently the chief, was ambling around the fire in the lieutenant's full dress uniform!

With cocked hat roosting on his feathers, the dress sword dangling about his legs was now and then tripping him a header that set Fountain hoping would come near enough to breaking his neck to save the necessity of shooting that new uniform full of holes. Only, the sword didn't do it.

So, presently, the lieutenant passed the whispered word down our line, "Fire at the word, and then into them with the pistols!"

Seconds later the word came. And while it was already dusk, the range was so short that little lead was wasted, so little, in fact, that the pistols soon did the rest — did it so effectually that I have always feared there was little of the retrieved wardrobe not overventilated for winter wear.

Details? Just a little too gruesome, I'm afraid, for the refined sensibilities of these days, but I may say it was only four, to the best of my memory, that got to their ponies and escaped.

It was not often, however, in our clashes with the Navajos that we got something for nothing, and that affair was no exception to the general rule.

Drunken Indians fight like fury, stand up and take their medicine more cheerfully than when sober — actually don't come to realise they are dead until you get their scalps off.

So it was with that band. Why, at our first fire even those who had jagged themselves into a

trance we had supposed would surely lessen the odds against us, were on their feet in an instant, and once we were down among them were jabbing savagely with their lances.

None broke for their ponies until we had most of the band down for keeps, not, I am sorry to say, until three of my best mates were stiffening on the ground.

And there to this day the three sleep, ranked within the shadows of the lava.

Our reprisals were so heavy Fountain should have been happy, it seemed to me, but when, directly after the action was over, he found the chief fallen across the fire and his new full dress uniform coat pretty well reduced to cinders, he looked anything but pleased.

It was still early in the evening when we got back to the stagecoach, where, finding Fountain's mules measurably recovered, we hooked them to the buckboard and he and his wife bowled away west for Fort McRae.

And never again did I set eyes on the gallant lieutenant.

It was a passenger on that same southbound coach that brought me news of the finish of my good friend, Peach. For real friends the wild pair, he and Cox, were to me. They were always doing their best to keep me out of their worst scrapes, training me to face death with steady nerves, and thus schooling me in what turned out to be my lifelong occupation, battling with, re-

straining and apprehending the most desperate outlaws that infested the stage roads and mining camps of the Far West.

I have always felt myself the debtor of those two rough, courageous knights of the Far West, and it was for me a sad day when they passed out of my life.

Strangers to any colour of restraint of themselves, neither could stand army discipline and were in perpetual hot water with their company commander. Nothing prevented their being cashiered, or worse, but the fact that for any desperate emergency that called for straight shooting and reckless courage backed by always cool heads, they were worth any ten men in the regiment.

And however unworthy and reprehensible his life out of the service before the war, and even in the service, Peach's finish was worthy. For nearly a year after his enlistment terminated he did splendid service as a scout for the troops along and west of the Missouri.

But at last, one day, he passed out as most of his kind did in those days.

At the time he was scouting ahead of a wagon train, near old Fort Phil Kearney, through a section the Ogallalas let few trains slip through without attack.

Scouting a couple of miles ahead of his command, carefully working along and spying out the belt of timber that lined the stream, he overlooked a detachment of a large war party which

had hidden itself in a deep, dry watercourse that wound across the broad, level valley.

The first inkling he had of danger was when a band of yelling warriors charged him from the rear, and a still larger band dashed out and down upon him from their ambush higher up-stream.

Cut off from his command, all he could do was spur across the valley for the hills. But he had run less than half a mile, showered about with the ill-aimed lead of his pursuers, when it became plain to him he could not escape the rapidly converging lines.

Help was coming from the right — a detail of the cavalry escort was racing toward him — but it would be too late unless he could hold his enemies at bay.

There was only one chance — a stand. He took it.

Seeing no buffalo wallow available as a breastwork, he leaped to the ground, cut his horse's throat, dropped behind its quivering carcass and began shooting the already circling enemy.

On came the cavalry, closer and closer. Already they were beginning to fire at long range. It almost seemed his plucky fight was won, when, wholly unsheltered from the rear, a shot drilled his head.

Cox? Well, since both of us remained rovers of the western wilds, for some years our trails now and then crossed.

When, at length, the term of enlistment of the First Veteran Volunteers ended, the military

posts lining the Rio Grande and scattered through the mountains of New Mexico were garrisoned again with regulars, freed from service in the South by the gradual pacification of the more turbulent centres of reconstruction.

With a few of my mates I drifted north up the old Santa Fé trail, thence east to the Missouri, fetching up ultimately, stony broke, in Chicago.

Work I must have, but get it I couldn't, or at least didn't until I got hungrier than I like to think of now.

With all the industries of the country disorganised by the four years of civil war, few now living can realise the distress and hardship suffered by thousands, as from day to day of that period one after another of the regiments was mustered out of service.

Work was not to be had. High into the thousands ran the number of the discharged volunteers — youngsters who, like myself, had gone to the war wholly untrained in any useful trade. The break-up of the Northern and Southern armies had set them adrift, and for many of them the late sixties hold memories of little but want and misery.

At last, after I had starved down so thin I could not tell whether I had a stomach ache or a back ache, I was taken into the canvas gang of a circus — and found it very little less bloody work than fighting Navajos.

Fights more than a plenty were the lot of circus-men in those days — among themselves when

an unusually dull day left nothing doing with outsiders. For the first few weeks I did not fare so well, but once I got my weight back I never once was whipped while I stayed in the show business. In fact I made such a reputation that I quit, jumped, for once a man gets a proper " rep " as a fighter, of any sort, men are far too plenty who will come miles to call him down.

It was in Philadelphia I graduated from the circus. Hearing General Sherman was in town, I made bold to call on him. Like the fine soldier he was, the General saw me promptly; and, after inspecting my service papers, he was kind enough to provide me with transportation to Fort Laramie.

Laramie I had picked as the best place to find employment at tasks of the sort I was most used to, for at the time the papers were full of accounts of atrocities the overland travel up the Platte River was suffering at the hands of the Sioux.

— XI —

STILL SHEES SING MA LODGE

THE famous old frontier garrison, Fort Laramie, stood on a gravelly bench land beside the limped waters of the Laramie River, near its junction with the turbid current of the great North Platte. Previous to the discovery of gold in California, it had been a fur-trading post. Thereafter, throughout the period of the great overland movement to Nevada and California, and, indeed, for some years after the completion of the Union Pacific Railway, it was the principal garrison between Fort Phil Kearney and Fort Bridger. Lying midway of the long, weary trail, it was the place of refuge, rest and supply of the adventurous thousands who fared westward from the Missouri. Its day-to-day history for twenty-five years would hold no dull pages.

Arrived there, I found myself back in my kind of life, among my kind of people; back out of the stifling reek of cities, into the bright sunshine and crisp air of the foot-hills of the Rockies; back far away from the cave-dwelling metropolitans and soil-delving plodders whose narrowly circumscribed lives hardens hearts, shortens vision and

dwarfs manhood to all too near resemblance of the pathetic human types that groped timidly through the Flint Age. Ah! but, to my thinking, it takes big horizons, plenty of elbow-room and lots of God's pure air to save a man's brain from atrophy and keep his blood from turning to skim-milk, big horizons to make big men. No city ever spawned better than crude counterfeits of a Bonaparte or a Washington. Naught but the bitterest struggles with life at its crudest and hardest and a youth spent amid the brooding solitudes of boundless wilderness, could have served to endow our beloved Lincoln with his divine prescience, his lofty moral courage, his majestic mind and Christ-like sympathies.

And speaking of sympathies, it was there at Laramie mine got educated and broadened.

There at the time, and, indeed for many years before and many thereafter, the Post Trader was Col. Bullock, a real gentleman, if I ever saw one, of sound old Virginia stock, as close a student of humans as of the quality of powder and peltries. Trading among the Indians since his youth, knowing them intimately in their native state, long before they were first forced to war and then, later, contaminated, degenerated, by the greed of the whites, he remained to his death their warm admirer, sincere friend and ardent advocate.

To me, then, his views were novel; for, come into the Indian country at the period when about all the red tribesmen from the Gulf to the British

line were on the war path, I had only known them as ruthless raveners through the Plains and Rockies, whom it was fight to a standstill or die at their hands. But that it was not always so, he, and others, later, well convinced me.

On many a night, squatted around the big fireplace in his store that stood at the northwest angle of the parade ground, I have sat for hours among a group of army officers, trappers, scouts, guides and Indians, listening to Bullock's yarns of incidents illustrative of what he was always contending was the high character and admirable virtues of the red race before they were maddened by injustice and debauched with civilised vices.

One night, stirred by the raw boasts of a young officer of his diversions among the tepees of a neighbouring Sioux camp, there for trade during a brief lull in the generally prevailing warfare, Bullock broke in:

"So. So! more's the pity. But it was not always so, gentlemen, I give you my word.

"Virtue? Why no so called civilised community of history ever esteemed and practised virtue as it was held and practised by all the Plains tribes I have known, and I reckon you will admit there are none I have not known. Hum; virtue! carries me way back to — well, to — to memories of the prettiest squaw I ever saw, one it was a mighty big temptation to lie to get, for get her without a lie I could not.

"I was young and impressionable then, of course, but, honest, a mere glimpse of that girl,

just a long range squint at her, would set even a crippled centenarian capering — in her direction, most likely. Clad in a fawn skin tunic, covered with bead work and elk teeth and smoked to a light golden brown that blended beautifully with the lightly bronzed peaches she wore for cheeks, her two massive black braids writhing about her knees as she walked like great black snakes, keen and steady eyed as an eagle, stately of movement as a princess of blood royal, she was altogether the 'biggest medicine' these hoary old Plains ever produced. None of your docile camp drudges was she, and a bold one would be the buck that could muster the courage to try to break her to one. The only Indian girl any of you ever saw that could even approach her is Emily Richaud, old Nic Janis's daughter, the one that tomahawked the Chief Yellow Hair for killing her man.

"And it was sure enough royal blood, in a Plains way, that was racing in that girl's veins, for she was the daughter of the head chief of a big band of Lakotas, a downright wild bunch, then come in to the post to trade for the first time, from God alone knows how far above the Bad Lands.

"Never will I be caught forgetting the morning her scarred old father marched up to the store, followed, it looked to me, by what must be about all the squaws of his band, all loaded to break their backs with furs, all but her, for I reckon you could no more force a load on her

than on a war chief. For those were proper *Treasure* days, when the different bands rarely showed up for trade that their dogs were not packing all the fur they could *travois,* fur in quality and quantities that spelt quick riches for the trader lucky enough to get it, buffalo and elk robes, buck and antelope skins, beaver and otter sometimes in bales, with now and then a silver fox or a black wolf.

" Cost me a plenty, too, did their arrival, for I was close to a big bargain for a rare fine lot of otter with old No Flesh; and when I forgot all about him and his bunch of otter, as I did, the moment I saw that girl, the old coffee cooler got huffy, took his fur away, and never brought it back.

" Of course, as soon as I could get my second wind I had to settle down to trading, but I guess the chief found me about the softest snap in the way of a trader he had ever been up against. For it didn't take more than about two squints to convince me I wanted that girl more than all the fur then offering in Laramie, and I was wasting no time trying to win her good graces, with nuts, and candy, and raisins, and — and with ribbons and every last gawd and trinket I could think of likely to impress her with at least some small measure of the sentiments I found swelling me nigh to bursting.

" Days, and finally a week so passed, until the sweets and trinket end of the shelves and show cases were near bereft of contents — but to good

purpose, for her eyes were softening to me, her lisped Lakota labials lower toned, her hand shake — well, it had come to have a mighty nice gentle little pressure in it.

" Time to tackle her father, the old chief, was plainly come, and I got busy — sat down with him one afternoon to smoke and bargain, for, as among all primitive folk, the disposal of his daughter as a bride was from his viewpoint purely a matter of barter, a question of how much he could get for her. And a fine article of old hold-up he turned out; stuck me a plenty before he got done, although I may as well admit that if he had had nerve enough to tap me for the entire store and stock of unshipped furs, like as not he would have gotten them, for I sure wanted that girl, *bad*.

" Well, after putting in the entire afternoon at it, hammer and tongs, finally we got together on terms, and gravely shaking hands on the deal, he pulled his freight for his lodge.

" The next morning, bright and early, he was at the store with a string of squaws and young bucks, come for the mixed lot of plunder that represented the agreed price of my princess. And I was ready for him, no fear.

" To the young bucks my breeds turned over my grey race mare, La Bonte, the swiftest piece of horseflesh west of the Big Muddy, sure alone to win him twice the value of all the stuff I was turning over to him, and also five split-eared cayuse ponies.

" Then the squaws gathered up the rest, a lot, and a big lot it was, of flour, sugar, salt, cloth, blue broadcloth and calico prints, a Hawkins rifle and enough powder and lead to equip a fair sized war party — just can't remember it all. But I do recall my greedy old prospective father-in-law insisted at the finish I must ' throw in,' as boot, a can of peaches, at which I didn't balk — glad enough he was not tapping me far harder.

" That night I strolled down to his camp, to claim my bride. Come to his lodge, he received me with all the grave courtesy of my old Virginia daddy, seated me on a robe beside the lodge fire, and motioned my princess and the other squaws out of the lodge. When we were alone, he slowly filled and carefully tamped his great council pipe, lighted it, took a whiff and passed the pipe to me.

" And there we sat smoking, passing and repassing the pipe, for quite an hour, in utter silence, before he spoke. At last, looking me straight in the eye, he queried:

" ' My friend, how long you stay among us? You stay here all your life, 'till *Wakanda* calls you to join the Spirit Hunters? '

" Surprised at the question, but not dreaming what was coming, I answered, ' My friend, I cannot tell you. In his movements, a white man is governed by his work, his business. I may remain here among you until I die, and I may not. Only *Wakanda* can know.'

" ' Ah! Ah! ' he softly murmured; ' as I feared; as I feared.' And then he fell silent for

perhaps ten minutes, gazing fixedly into the fire. But presently he resumed:

"'But, my friend, you leave here, you *travois* back to the Big Water, to the Land of the Rising Sun, where your great white tribe have their lodges, you take my daughter with you? She be *always* your squaw, wherever your lodge is pitched?'

"Took me clean off my feet, did that question, for in an instant I realised it spelled the finish of all my dreams — unless, to be sure, I lied to him, and my old Virginia daddy had not brought me up to lie comfortably. Take her *home!* Why I reckon it would just about break the heart of my dear old mammie to find me mated to a savage woman, no matter if she was a princess that would make the home girls look like — well, just littler. No; it was not possible. And NO! I would not lie to him. So I gritted my teeth and answered:

"'My friend, I fear she — we — would not be happy among the white lodges. No. I expect to stay here many winters, but if go I must back among my people, here I must leave her — but rich, chief, rich; I'll leave her the richest squaw of the Lakota tribe.'

"Quick came my sentence, in sorrowful but firm tone:

"'My daughter is not that sort! You cannot have her. But your tongue is straight as a Lakota's; when you most need a friend, send your young runners for me.'

"And then he rose, pressed my hand, and gravely lead me to the door of the lodge.

"Crude as was that unlettered savage, product of the most primitive of Nature's human moulds, deep stamped into him was the hall-mark of all the loftier qualities that distinguish a true gentleman, you'll all admit, when I tell you that early the next morning he returned to me the beasts and goods I had paid him, that for some of the food they had consumed he paid me in peltries, that he quickly finished trading with me on far cheaper prices for his fur than he had been demanding, and early in the afternoon had struck his tepees and was *travoising* away into the north!"

But before we contrived to shake off the trance Bullock's yarn had thrown us into an old dispute was resumed that made a sharp foil to the tale of his own truthfulness and threw us into gales of laughter.

The disputants were Jim Bridger and Sergeant Schneider, Bridger the famous trapper, scout and guide, who then for years had made himself a holy terror to the Plains tribes and to the hostile end of Mormondom, the Destroying Angels; Schneider, a trapper through the Rockies a good part of a generation before, in 1849, the Mounted Rifles commanded by Maj. Sanderson established Laramie as a military post, later, when the game became scarce, himself enlisted in the service.

Met over their cups in the post canteen, these two grizzled old cronies were ever quarrelling

over the question as to which of them had first slept within the shadows of Laramie Peak, a dispute that often became so bitter that worse than verbal hostilities were only averted by the interference of their friends.

Forty miles west of the Post and, of course, in all but the stormiest weather in plain sight of it, rose the magnificent peak that constitutes the most lofty uplift of the northern reach of the Rockies, its snowy crest towering 10,000 feet above the surrounding plain and 14,000 feet above sea level. The southern buttress of the giant gate the North Platte's insistent current has carved through the main range, across its very foot had limped the weary thousands prey to the lure of California's gold, limping on to whatever destiny held for them, a few to fabulous fortune, most to unmarked graves, on they had limped through Whiskey Gap, up the Sweetwater and on over the South Pass.

Scarcely had Bullock finished, when Schneider opened truculently on his crony:

"Chim Prijer! Vould you answer me vun quvestion? Chust vun, Chim? Now vould you?"

"Sure, old scout; why not?" answered Bridger.

"Vell, now," continued Schneider, "vould you pelieve me if I *svore* to you I vas dellin' you de druth?"

"Liable to strain my system horrible, but I'd make a try," answered Jim, little suspecting the test he was inviting.

"Vell, I chust vant to dell you dat ven *I, me,* first koom to dis country, Laramie Peak, she vant ofer five hundrt feet high! Vould you pelieve *dot?*"

"Believe it? Sure! I'm bound to believe it; in fact I *know* it must be so. Always felt sure you'd dropped in around Laramie lately, and now you've done give yourself away proper. Why, Schneider, you Dutch tenderfoot, when I first drifted up into the northern Rockies, up there, right where Laramie Peak now sets, there was a hole in the ground ten mile wide and a mile deep! Reckon we can't count *you* among the proper old timers, son."

And with a, "Vat's de use drying to argify vith a tam liar!" followed by a chorus of rumbling Dutch oaths, the old sergeant passed out into the night.

No more was the crowd calmed of its boisterous merriment over Schneider's discomfiture, than Nic Janis, after tossing a fat-sputtering pine knot among the glowing embers of the fireplace, took up the vein of thought of Bullock's story.

A native of the French colony of St. Charles, far away east down the Missouri, bred to the red sash and moccasins, the bold heart and gay spirit of a *coureur du bois,* to the Plains Janis had come as a *voyageur.* But, more thrifty and ambitious than most of his kind, then for years he had been a trader among the tribes, who so esteemed him and among whom he had such in-

fluence that few were the lodge fires to which he was not welcome.

"*Mais oui, mes ami; c'est bien vrai, le bon Dieu le sait,*" Nic began. "Ze good fren' ours, M'sieu Bullock, he's know our peopl' for ze good peopl', ze kin' peopl' wi' ze gran' heart, zey are. He's spik you ze straight tongue. I know, me. Ze hones' peopl' zey are, *aujourdhui,* for all who spik zem ze straight tongue.

"Yas; yas; M'sieu Bullock, hees tell you trut'; an' me, I could tell you de storee true *toute la nuit,* yas, evr' night 'til de ice ees gone from ze boomin' Laramie; yas, storee prove how Injun hees good to enemy as to ze bes' fren' *chacun* should be, eef ze enemy ees distress.

"Ha! You give ze laugh? *Tiens! Quel gens maudites! Sapristi!* Me, I tell you one instance, happen me.

"*C'etait cette hiver maudit,* ze wintair ze snow come ze day of St. François Xavier. Night an' day ze snow she fall for t'ree days ovair all ze plains. W'en? M'sieu Bullock an' Jim Bridger, you remembaire, *non?* More'n fifteen wintair ago, *non?* Well, ze snow she fall an' fall widout no win', till she covair all ze lan' lak' one beeg robe *blanche.* W'ere ze win', ze gran' nort' win'? I do' know, me. Mebbeso she tire', blow so many, many year, an' she be take a res', away up nort' w'ere she have ze lodge. *Non?*

"T'ree, mebbeso four feet deep she lay, zat snow. Not one beeg grass hees show ze *tête*

petite. Ze grass hees covaired; all covaired; all.

"So she stay two, t'ree days, ze air so still, an' col', ah! *mon Dieu!* so col'! Zen one night ze sleet she come; *nom de Dieu, quel* sleet! an' she leave all ze worl' *glacée, une planche* of ice! An' zen, *Sainte Vierge,* how evairy wan hees suffaire, an' die! *Mais oui; toute le monde suffaire,* an' near evairy wan hees die, ze mans, ze horse, ze Injun, ze buffalo, ze deer. Ah! but ze *bon Dieu,* Hees mak' Hees peopl' ze crool hard time zat wintaire. W'ite mans, hees die lak Injun; work bull an' horse, hees die lak buffalo an' deer.

"An' me? W'y for I no die? It was jus' ze good luck, *non plus.* I was camp fo' trade wi' Red Robe's band o' Lakotas, in ze beeg timbaire of ze cotton-wood you call ze Fremont's Orchard, on ze Sout' Platte, between Pawnee Butte an' ze mout' o' ze Cache la Poudre. Game? *Non! Non! Non!* A few young buck, hees go out for hunt ze firs' few days, but ze few who return bring no raw meat 'cept w'ere de ice crust o' ze snow cut hees laig.

"But Red Robe, hees Injuns was reech; have *beaucoup* horse, many, many horse. *Bon!* Ze trees zey grow ver' theek een ze *petit bois,* an' zey mak' ze sheltaire *magnifique,* mak' ze warm place for ze horse, *non?* An' for mak' ze horse ze belly full, squaw shees cut ze bark tendaire o' ze young cotton-wood, an' shees give for eat ze horse. So ze horse hees live on ze bark, *et nous,* we, Red Robe an' our Lakotas, we live on ze horse, *non?*

" Days an' days she so stay, col', an' all ze worl' *glacée;* an' w'ile we in ze *petit bois,* we no suffaire, een all ze plains for hundr'ds an' hundr'ds miles, near evairy one an' all ze game hees die of ze hungaire an' ze col'; for ze rivaire she's few een ze plains w'ere grow ze tree plainty for mak' ze sheltaire an' for eat ze horse an' ze game. Ah! *Mais oui,* zis we learn *plus tard,* but ze firs' *nouvelles* shees come ze night of ze *jour de l'an* — w'at you call ze New Years, *non?*

" *Et quelle nuit d'horreur!* W'at night for mak' freeze ze marrow in ze bone, for since ze nort' win' shees have beeg res', shees start een *autrefois* an' blow her bes'. *Sapristi!* mak' me shivaire now to t'ink dat night.

" An' me, I seet by ze fire o' ma *maison sauvage* an' t'ink *merci au Sainte Vierge* for save me suffaire an' spare me *faim.* An' I swear w'en winter pas' an' come ze spring, ze *travois* a creakin' an' ze runner hees sing, I mak', me, for ze firs' *eglise* an' burn *beaucoup* candle for escape ze freeze.

" Den w'ile I so seet, vair' much at ease, my ear catch soun', outside, 'mong ze near-by trees, a voice soun' lak *doleur humain,* lak' one hees suffaire vair' much pain. An' w'en, liftin' ze flap o' ma tepee door, dere on ze snow lay two figaire, so stark an' still een ze moonlight glare I t'ink dey move no more.

" I call *mes gens* an' pack them een, an' ol', ol' warrior, *toute squellette,* an' a gal *petite,* hees *enfante,* I bet, bot' so t'in o' ze hungaire brav' I

t'ink dem ready for mak' ze grav'. Needer could spik ze word propaire, on'y mak' groan o' ze las' despair. Ze dog I kill; mak' soup for *petit soupaire,* for ze meat o' ze horse hees *jamais* tendaire; an' *gotte, por gotte,* leddle at time, I treat dose Injun lak' ma kin'.

" But at ze firs' glance w'en I lay dem dere, on a t'ick soft robe by ze lodge's fire, I see, *Mon Dieu! Quel chose etrange!* deys not *de nous,* ze Lakota Sioux, but ees Crow, *qui toujours nous mange! Mais oui, des enemi,* who fight wit' ze Sioux since eternity!

" Wan, mebbeso two day zey lay zat way, *jusqu'au mortes, le bon Dieu sait,* but w'en ze dog soup hees eat heem all, ze warrior hees talk an' ze *petite* shees crawl. Warrior hees tell me of ze lan', een ze wide, smooth valley call' Repubhorreurs gran', how, w'en ze beeg snows covaire lican, zat geeve no shelter fo' beast or man, ze Crow camp shees lay.

" An' w'en ze nort' win' hees come down, all horse hees ron' 'til hees can't be foun'; an' all ze young brave, lak' warriors, too, zat try for trail, sloshin' thro' sleet an' blin' by hail, hees lost, *toujours perdu.* Zen hungaire hees come een ze lodge *sauvage;* young squaw she seet een sullen rage, hark to ze cry 'v *les pauvres petites* w'ile ol' folks chant ze death-song meet. An' die as zey seet an' lay as zey fall, soon ze nort' win' hees keeled zem all, an' lodge an' wickiup mak' ze grave 'v all no one hees come to save — all but ze *petite* an' zis brave.

"Zen out t'ro' ze col' plain hees go, w'ile ze sun dogs glint on ze sheeted snow, packin' hees chil', stumblin', fallin', weakenin' fas' 'til to a crawl hees come at las', but ze crawl shees fetch heem by my lodge, provin' ze *bon Dieu* heem no dodge.

"Wan, mebbeso two week pass away, w'en, een ze evenin'-time wan day, me, I go to ze council lodge, beat ze drum for call ze tribe, beat heem more 'til all inside. Zen, w'en ze beeg pipe hees go roun', me, I spik' 'v ze enemi foun', tell how hees come for sanctuaire *Dieu sait* ze miles t'ro' ze col', col' air.

"Zen up ros' chief een red robe *belle,* an' hees tell me, 'Brothaire, you've done well; Arapaho, Crow, or false Pawnee, no Sioux can treat lak' enemi w'en ze nort' win' hees mak' hell!'

"An' me, I spik you ze good tongue straight, w'en I tell you nex' day, at easy gait, ze Crow hees ride away, on Sioux horse to heem donnée.

"*Et ce n'est pas tout;* zat ees not all; for shore as I seet here by ze wall, w'en ten year pass an' I'm come *ici,* here for trade een ze Laramie, ze Crow I meet an' wan fine gal tall.

"'Brothaire,' hees say, 'I remembaire well ze col', col' day you help ze poor Crow on hees way; hees poor mans zen an' hees poor mans now, but here's hees daughter, she be your squaw!'"

"And lucky dog you, Nic!" Bullock broke in.

To which the *voyageur* answered:

"Ah! *mais oui; bien vrai; moi,* I t'ink dat way, for still shees sing ma lodge."

Hushed the deep bass voice, finished the quaint rhymes into which Nic was ever unconsciously dropping when yarn-spinning, one at least of his younger listeners left Bullock's store with new ideas of Indian character.

Fort Laramie did not hold me long. To be sure, I had a few weeks' lively work scouting for the troops in the chase that followed Red Cloud's attack of the whites at the Horseshoe Bend of the North Platte River. But the rapid advance westward of the Union Pacific, and the throwing of strong forces of regular troops into the frontier garrisons, made possible by the pacification of the south, soon had the Sioux begging for peace and glad for asylum on a reservation. And thereafter quiet they stayed until the discovery of gold in the Black Hills, in the heart of their reservation, when, upon the Government's failure to protect them against the inrush of miners from Cheyenne and Sidney on the south, Fort Pierre and Bismarck on the east, and Bozeman on the west, again they took the warpath, in a last desperate attempt to hold the fatherland where their young were born and their dead buried. Then came the bloody battles of the Rosebud and the Little Big Horn.

So, once our column was marched back into Laramie, there was no more work for me, and I joined a freighter's outfit and pulled out for the then new town of Cheyenne, down through Eagle's Nest and the Chugwater.

Arrived there, I found it made up of the most

desperate lot of thugs and hold-ups it has ever been my misfortune to run into. No man's life or money was safe there. They ruled the town — had the decent element buffaloed — controlled the town peace officers and magistrates and themselves composed the local Vigilance Committee. And any who resented their robberies or sought to check their violence was soon hanging, victim of the stranglers. Indeed, it was long after the rails were pushed out beyond Green River before Cheyenne contrived to measurably rid itself of the band of human wolves that made life there a terror for peaceful folk.

Shortly before my arrival, a man named Harris and another named Henry Poor Morgan were stretched by the vigilantes — for the crime of resisting an attempt to hold up and rob them one night after they had been drinking, deeper than was good for them, in the dance halls. In defending themselves, they had the bad luck to kill two of the brighter lights of the vigilante fraternity; that was all. An Eastern town would have turned in and bought them a bunch of medals, but there their really very worthy service to society only won them a few feet of rope and a swing on a telegraph-pole.

One night, a few days thereafter, who should slip into our freighter's camp on Crow Creek, at the edge of the town, than my old California preceptor and mate, George Cox, the hero of the Talama *fiesta,* come from God alone knows where, fugitive from whatever new devilment he was not

telling. Nor was I asking. For, good a friend as he had been to me, I had long realised that the less I knew of his doings the safer I'd be. Of course, his turning up there did not surprise me in the least; wherever gambling was busiest and play highest, that was the place to look for Cox. Something sultry had been doing with him for a certainty, for he slipped up to me with finger on lip, and at the first chance tipped me that he was passing under a new name.

After supper, he led me down to the banks of the Crow, where all by our lonesomes, he told me he had heard down at Sidney of the hanging of Morgan, who had served with us in the California Column, always creditably; and explained that, since there was no chance his murderers would be punished by the local authorities, he had come over, as he put it, " to throw the fear of God into a few of them."

The next day we lay quietly around camp. When night fell, we strolled up into town and began drifting from one gambling and dance hall to another, Cox taking a fling at faro now and then, but only as cover for his hunt for a satisfactory grouping of the bunch he had planned to pot.

The fact is, he had not asked me to accompany him, and God knows the truth is I did not want to; but with the odds he was going against, some scores against one, I couldn't get my own consent to let him go alone. But when I told him he could bank on my staying tight to his flank, he answered:

"Sure, son, sure; I just knowed you'd want in. Only you *sabe* old George *prefers* to make his war-plays by his lonesome. However, I reckon you'd be nervous stayin' in camp; so you can trail along. But mind you keep your guns in your clothes till old George is down or gives you the word to cut in to the play. And of course it will be have the horses handy and split the scenery a plenty lively as soon as the fun is over."

It was past midnight before Cox found a stage set to suit him — a box at the variety theatre that held seven of the most prominent of the Vigilantes remaining since the taking off of the pair Harris and Morgan had bagged. We had contrived to get the box directly opposite them, separated from them by no more than thirty feet.

Waiting until a be-spangled and be-frilled frail one had finished a crude imitation of a French cancan, and the weary piano thumper was taking a brief rest, Cox called cheerfully across, "Gentlemen, here's an old comrade of Mr. Henry Poor Morgan, come to attend to your case, and he wants a stiff for each of the three names!"

Then, as Cox called, "For Henry! For Poor! For Morgan!" two pitched over the low box-rails among the audience on the main floor, and one dropped like a sack in the smoke of his mates' pistols. It was a matter of seconds, mighty few of them, until Cox and I had jumped through a window directly back of our box, had got to our horses and were away. And however we escaped the flock of lead they threw into our box,

I don't know; maybe because old Master figured there was plenty more like good work for us to do; maybe because few of their sort of curs ever could shoot straight at anything more dangerous than a man's back, anyway.

Long before dawn we parted. Better to leave them two trails to puzzle over if they managed to pick up our sign. But of any pursuit I myself heard nothing at the time.

I made it through without incident to the North Platte, beyond Laramie City, where, stony broke, I drew on my early Michigan training and turned to chopping wood for a grub-stake.

The fact is, the ill luck that there befel me came nearer driving me to holding up a train than any other stress I have had to battle with. For after I had finished chopping and piling one hundred cords of wood, and was starting to find an outfit to haul it in for sale to the railroad contractors, along came some government land officials who declared me a trespasser on Uncle Sam's land, and seized my wood!

Pretty deal to hand a man who had given six of his best years to the service of his country, especially when there were millions of acres of unoccupied timber-lands round about!

Close to pushing me out on the scout for fair was that incident. But after having successfully survived the temptations of my life with Peach and Cox, I decided to try for a job to guard some stage instead of a chance to hold one up.

— XII —

COX REDIVIVUS

WHEN I finally became convinced there was for me no hope of redress for the seizure by government land-agents of the one hundred cords of wood I had chopped on the North Platte, I tramped west to Green River, whence a newly established stage-line ran north to the then booming placer-camp at South Pass City.

The road was infested with road-agents, who had been so ruthless in shooting up the coaches that the job of messenger, or stage-guard, had become anything but popular. But to a man stony broke like I was, it looked good, and I had no more than applied for it than I found myself elected.

The third trip proved quite enough for me — showed me there was nothing in it with that company.

One evening, as we were slowly dragging through heavy sand on an up-grade, out upon us from the sage brush sprang two bandits. One seized the leaders and yelled to the driver to stop, while the other jumped in close to the nigh front wheel and, by way of introduction, handed

up a shot that narrowly grazed me and wounded the driver severely in the shoulder.

Almost at the instant he fired I sprang off the box at him, shooting as I jumped, bored him through and through, and landed all tangled up with him as he crumpled up. And, just as I contrived to roll free of him, I saw his mate starting from the off-side of the team to run around the leaders for a shot at me — a very silly play for him to make at any man more dangerous than a tenderfoot. Firing from where I lay on the ground, I sent a shot below the bellies of the leaders that permanently freed the roads of number two.

Frightened by the firing, the team ran away, for the driver, with one arm crippled and weakened of his wound, was unable to control them. Moreover, he told me later, he had thought me dead, and did not try very hard to stop them.

Thus left alone and afoot, and not knowing what mates the robbers might have near at hand with their horses, I ducked through the sage brush and dough-boyed it into South Pass City on my own hind legs.

There the stage company did hire a doctor to dress the driver's wound and passed me a few thanks. But since I could not find any one to trade me cartridges in exchange for the little jag of thanks that constituted my only reward for saving the mails and express, and since I knew I was bound to be a marked man on that run, sure to be potted shortly if I stayed, I threw up my job.

I heard some time passed before the company found my successor.

The next move I made involved me in altogether the most regrettable and one of the most dangerous associations of my life.

At that time a man who was known as a most desperate character, Jack Watkins by name, was camped near the mouth of the Sweetwater, engaged in shooting elk, deer and antelope, and in peddling the meat among the railway contractors employed on the Union Pacific.

While generally feared, he had not as yet outlawed himself. Thus, when he proposed I should join him in his meat-shooting game, offering me a half interest in the gains if I would do the killing while he attended to the marketing, it seemed quite the best-looking opening in sight for me, and I took it.

Come to his camp, I turned to and never worked harder, for I thought I saw prospects of a good, quick stake in sight.

To be sure, the antelope and black-tail deer were easy enough; if one worked well back from the stage-roads the flashing, yellowish-white flanks of the antelope were thick in the wide, rich-grassed valley leading up toward Laramie Peak as sheep in a pasture.

But getting elk was killing work for fair; for until the first heavy autumn snows come and drive them to assembly in bands of hundreds, and often of some thousands, in the low, open valleys, they are only to be found high up, about timber-line,

near to perpetual snow. The stalking, and packing their meat down the gorges, was a job to wear out the strongest.

However, at it I continued cheerfully enough for three months, seeing little of Watkins — never, in fact, except to turn in my meat, unsuspicious of the storm he was raising.

I had not been unmindful that I was not seeing the colour of any money, and he must have been taking in a lot of it, for there was quick sale for all the meat we could deliver.

But since, in my isolated mountain life, I had no use for even a penny, and then had no notion he meant to rob me, I was not worrying about it.

When my awakening came it was rude enough. During a night he had spent at my camp, come to pack out a load of meat, I had told him a hunter had built a dugout in the next cañon north of us and was shooting meat for the railway graders — a youngster, sort of a tenderfoot at that. But since his only comment was a surly "Hell he has!" I thought no more of it.

Shortly after dawn he left my camp — for a week or two, as usual, I supposed. Fancy then my surprise when, the following evening, two or three hours after dark, he stumbled into my cabin and hung up on the wall a new Winchester and belt of cartridges.

Then he squatted by the fire and began awkwardly counting a roll of bills, something over two hundred dollars. When I asked him where he had been he growled:

"Drifted by the dugout of that young hunter feller, an' found some of the neighbours had beefed him, so I just annexed his plunder!"

Froze me stiff, did that story, for in a flash it came over me that Jack himself was the murderer. And when I blurted out the thought, told him it was quits for us from that moment, and demanded a settlement, he answered:

"Sure, bub, it was me — just little me. Moseyed up to his window, found him sittin' writin' a fool letter — to his mammy, it turned out — an' allowin' he had no partic'lar right in our huntin' *pre*serves, I handed him a load out of the six.

"That was what I went over there to do, as far as I can remember, for I got mighty het up last night thinkin' of him poachin' in on our private *pre*serves.

"An' now as for you, bub, if you want to quit, I reckon you'll have to. You've done toted fair with me, an' I don't want to hurt you none — an' I won't if you cut out your fool war-talk. You know back talk never sounds good to Jack; an' if you don't quit it I reckon he'll have to leave you here, feed for the coyotes.

"Settlement? Sure, bub; she's due you, an' you shall get it — in the mornin'. But right now I'm powerful tired. Let's sleep a few."

In five minutes the red-handed scoundrel was snoring. Several hours I sat alone by the fireplace, struggling with the conviction that I ought to waken, provoke, and do my best to kill him;

and ever since I have regretted I did not do so, for had I succeeded it would have rid the northern stage-roads of the most ruthless bandit of all who for some years thereafter infested them.

And when at last, worn of my lonely vigil, I rolled up in my blankets, it was to sleep so heavily that when I awakened in the morning I found that Watkins had slipped away while I slept. Settlement? Well, I guess he thought his refraining from turning me into coyote meat was about all that was coming to me in payment for my work. Anyway, it was all the payment I ever got.

But at the moment I was not taking his treatment of me in any spirit of resignation. In fact, I was packing my blankets to take his trail and camp on it, when up to my cabin came two prospectors, the Pettie boys.

They had seen Watkins slipping up toward the young hunter's camp in the twilight, and passing there in the morning and finding him dead, had laid the killing to him, and had started one of their prospecting mates to advise the troops.

Then they passed me a lot more news of his doings; how he had been gambling and drinking, shooting up Laramie and North Platte, and generally running riot there, evidently blowing all our meat money as fast as he got it.

So, realising that following him could bring me no more than my trouble for my pains, when they plainly told me the troops would be sure, finding me Watkins's partner, to take me as an accom-

plice, I promptly decided it better to cut loose from him and begin anew elsewhere.

I have always felt I owe much to the Pettie brothers for giving me the warning. Indeed, of this I became convinced early, for while I was *en route* to Green River a few weeks later a mail-carrier gave me news of the sequel and also of certain other of Watkins's doings.

One evening a sergeant and trooper of Colonel Dodge's command stole into Watkins's camp, caught him eating, and covered him with their pistols before he realised their presence.

At the order to throw up his hands Watkins cried, "Don't shoot 'im, Bill!" When the two soldiers turned to confront what they supposed was a new danger, he dropped them both before, in their surprise, they contrived to pull trigger, seized their horses, and loped away into the hills — now an outlaw past reprieve.

And that, assassin though he was, he was not lacking in nerve became a matter of gory proof a few weeks later, at Laramie City, when one morning a friend of his was arraigned for murder.

Just as the prisoner was brought to the bar by Sheriff Brophy, Watkins rode up to the court-house door, left his horse outside, coolly walked into the court-room, killed the sheriff and his deputy, and he and his friend escaped, riding double on the one horse. And the terror with which he had inspired the community was such

that the pursuit of him was not particularly enthusiastic.

From that hour to his death, many years later, with heavy rewards on his head, with his description in the hands of every peace officer and in every military post west of the Missouri, marshals, stage-messengers, and troops were hunting him for the blood-thirsty beast he was, a scourge of the overland stage and emigrant travel.

And lucky indeed was I to escape him when I did, although, to be sure, it was not long before I had myself managed to butt into trouble that for a time had me on the scout to save my own skin.

Striking westward to make sure of putting plenty of miles between myself and Watkin's red trails, a long, weary plod through the alkali and sage brush of the Bad Lands brought me to Green River City, then a new "front" camp on the Union Pacific.

There, I met an acquaintance just then in from the West, who gave me news of my friend George Cox, in the way of a sequel to the bunch of off-hand justice he had dealt the Cheyenne vigilantes for their hanging of our comrade, Henry Poor Morgan.

It seems that after we parted, he had made his way well to the west of Salt Lake, and, finally, thinking himself beyond the hue and cry, had gotten employment as a section foreman on the Central Pacific, at Humboldt Wells, Nevada.

But since the friends of the vigilantes had put

a high price on his head, few weeks had passed before a posse of nine men, including three Cheyenne officers who had been slowly working out his trail and six other local gun experts, rode boldly up on Cox late one afternoon, never dreaming their number could fail to bluff him to a surrender.

But they did not know my old mate — and, in fact, only three of them lived long enough to get acquainted.

For, scenting trouble at the first glimpse of them, but waiting quietly until they had come well up within close pistol range, standing unsheltered on the open railway grade through the level Humboldt Valley, Cox opened fire on them before they had time to explain their errand.

And such was his marvellous coolness and dexterity that he had killed outright six of the posse, and had put the other three to flight, before they realised they had him riddled like a sieve, a sure victim if they had possessed the nerve to wait a few minutes out of range until he fell unconscious, as he did, of his wounds.

Of course, he had all the advantage of being firmly afoot while the posse were mounted, but still I think the reader will agree that, with the odds against him heavy as they were, it was a two-handed man's fight Cox put up.

Brought into the Wells by the men of his section gang, Captain Smith, of the Eighth Cavalry, learning of his desperate condition, took him in charge, spirited him away into some safe hiding,

and had his wounds dressed and cared for, to his full convalescence, by an army surgeon.

In all which good samaritanship Captain Smith was honestly repaying a good turn done him by Cox some years before, in old Tucson days.

There, one night, when the captain was returning to his camp from town, he was set upon by four thugs — Tiger Bill, Jack Briston, Pete Bean, and Pat Marley, bent upon robbery.

Providentially for him, at the moment of the attack Cox, unnoticed by the others, was passing. Always lightning quick to take in a situation, and seldom guilty of a false play from his point of view, old Cox cut into the game so promptly and effectively that Captain Smith escaped with a few cuts of the scalp that a surgeon's needle soon remedied, Briston and Tiger Bill fell into their last sleep, while Bean and Marley split the scenery into ribbons on a wild stampede to get out of range of Cox's pistols.

Of course the captain was grateful — rightly enough, too, for doubtless Cox had saved his life — but when he offered Cox a hundred dollars and Cox declined it, his debt had to remain unpaid. And so it stayed until Cox's fight at Humboldt Wells gave the captain his chance.

I found Green River City a highly finished understudy for Cheyenne, both in respect of general lawlessness and of dominant control by vigilantes.

Courts and legally constituted peace officers the town boasted, but it was seldom they found, or

were permitted, any form of occupation in the line of the duties such authorities are supposed to perform.

All lived under the corrupt influence or in deadly fear of the vigilantes. Meantime, crime and violence ran riot, limited only to the available number of victims.

Two of their most notable victims were Dr. Johnson, a nephew of Brigham Young, and his wife, a niece of Heber C. Kimball — kinfolk of the two brightest lights of Mormondom.

En route from Omaha to Salt Lake, they were camped alongside the rushing current of the Green, just outside of the town, and near to my camp.

Returning to my camp early one afternoon, I passed a gang of the leading vigilantes marching into town, some packing the limp-dangling body of one of the most prominent members of their organisation, others dragging along Dr. Johnson, his hands bound and a rope around his neck.

As the row, whatever it might be, was no affair of mine, and as my experiences among them years before had left me with no love for the Mormons, I continued toward my camp.

But, passing near the Johnson tent, my ear caught the sound of low sobbing within, plainly the voice of a woman, a note of distress no man could ignore. Entering, I found Mrs. Johnson bleeding and weak of a blow on the head from a six-shooter, and only semiconscious.

Quickly fetching cold water from the stream, I washed and bathed her head until, presently, she

was able to sit up and tell me the wretched story of her troubles.

An hour before, while her husband was down by the river fishing, near at hand but out of sight below the steep bank, two of the town toughs had entered her tent and grossly insulted her.

At her first scream the doctor came so quickly on the scene that, entering the tent behind her assailants, he was able to snatch the pistol from the belt of one of them and to kill the other, when the disarmed man rushed from the tent and fled. Directly she had fainted.

Thus it had happened that when, within a very few minutes, the disarmed thug returned, bringing his gang of strangling vigilantes, they had caught the doctor off guard, engaged in trying to reassure her of their safety, and had seized and made him a prisoner.

And when she, conscious again but still weak, had sought to fight her way to her husband's side, one of the brutes had struck her with his pistol.

That was about enough for me. For a woman's cry for help could land me in trouble up to my neck a lot quicker than any difficulties of my own.

And I reckon I would have gone into action anyway without any special appeal from her.

Thus I fell into the situation easy when she begged me to save the doctor, finishing by offering me on the spot one thousand dollars in bills, which she had concealed on her person, and promised me four thousand more on the safe landing of the doctor in Salt Lake.

Needy as I was, and sure, related as they were to the biggest Mormon guns, that they could well enough afford it, I took the money, and lost no time getting busy, for I well knew the stranglers would give the doctor short shrift.

For Mrs. Johnson I soon got asylum in a camp of bull-whackers (ox-team freighters) near by, men I knew would treat her well and never give her up as long as they could pull a trigger.

To them I suggested that some of them sit in and draw cards with me in the rescue game, but they allowed they were ready enough to confront any odds to protect a woman, but didn't care to attempt a break-in on that vigilante round-up for any man who was nothing to them.

So it was up to me to go it alone, and I did my best.

But the time I lost searching for a good horse and saddle with which to pack away the doctor, in case I had luck enough to rescue him, came near costing his life.

When I loped into town, the streets, saloons, and stores around its centre were deserted, for practically the entire population was grouped near the north end of the main street, where the vigilantes were massed about a telegraph pole, over whose cross-arm the stranglers had already thrown the free end of the rope they had knotted to Johnson's neck.

The way I broke that strangler combination makes me laugh to this day. It proved so easy, and yet I much fear the plain truth of it will sound

to the average reader an incredible fable — or worse.

Still, there was little of the heroics in my crude strategy, for while in effect I charged into and through several hundred people at full gallop, I figured that the moment powder burned the rank and file of the townfolk would sprint like quarter horses trying to get out of range.

And I felt sure that if they did not leg it extra fast, three-fourths of the stranglers would be apt to catch up with them, for not one in a hundred of all the vigilantes I ever saw owned nerve enough to stand up before a man with a gun in his hand.

Nor did my calculations miscarry. They worked to a nicety, in all but the fact that I got rather more lead in my system than I had counted on.

Into and through the crowd of onlookers I dashed, scattering them like sheep, and had smashed in among the group of stranglers massed around the perch they had picked for Johnson before they had time to realise what was up. Then, sure that my lead would reach none but those who deserved it, I cut loose with my six-shooters right and left.

Melt? They just faded into the bald grey buttes of the local scenery, most of them — all of them for sufficient time to let me slash Johnson's hands free and pass him a Winchester as he swung into the saddle of my spare horse.

But the moment their first surprise was over there were enough nervy men in the lot to give

us all the trouble we could get along with, and no more had the Mormon hit the saddle than we became the centre of a hell of hail it was a mystery we escaped.

Nor did I escape scatheless; my left arm and right foot were broken before we had run two hundred yards, and then, worst of all, down pitched my horse, dead.

But Dr. Johnson proved good leather, pulled up instantly and dragged me up behind his own saddle, and then on we raced. Indeed he played the game and stuck by me so pluckily that I bore him no grudge for the pair of painful and badly crippling wounds he had been the means of getting me.

If there was mounted pursuit that night, we saw none of it. Guess the scare thrown into them had them going sideways or running rings 'round themselves for an hour or two, anyway long enough to enable us to fade away.

The extent of casualties behind me of course I did not know at the time, but shortly thereafter I learned I had killed outright four and wounded six of the Johnson necktie party. Plenty, I remember I allowed, to assure their apprentice against unfavourable criticism if my preceptors, old Cox and Peach, had been on hand to see the fun.

After a wide circle, and breaking trail as well as we could, late the next day we made it to the near vicinity of Fort Bridger, where, in consideration of a pretty athletic touch of my reward

money, a Mormon family gave me shelter and care, bringing out the post surgeon to dress my wounds.

And there the doctor left me, with my full consent, to push on into Salt Lake. Helpless to ride myself, still my right pistol-hand was yet in action; and if a bigger posse of Green Riverites came in on me than I could take care of single-handed, two of us could not expect to stand them off. So it was for me just a question of keeping hid out until able to fork a horse again and hit the trail.

Several days passed without any sign of pursuit, until I had begun to think the luck was with me.

But one afternoon, while I sat at a window watching the road, up to the house rode three horsemen whom I recognised at some distance as three of the well-known Green River stranglers, Ed Gilmore, Jack Roe and Jim Buck.

Fortunate for me it was that I sat at the window, for it gave Mrs. Mormon No. 1 time to practise about the most cunning piece of hiding I ever knew of.

Having no window, my bedroom was very dark, even at midday. So that clever Mrs. Mormon No. 1 pulled the feather tick of my bed away from the wall sufficiently far to enable me to cuddle in between tick and wall, and then she neatly spread, smoothed down and tucked in the bed quilts until nothing showed but the broad and apparently unoccupied bed surface. This done, she passed on out to receive our visitors.

Into the house they roughly tramped without apology, and told her they had heard a wounded man they wanted was harboured there.

"Wounded man?" she coolly answered; "you are crazy; search the house, if you want; it's not so big it will take you long."

And they did. First they groped all about my bedroom, and finally brought a candle and made a careful survey under my bed; but they didn't find little me, cuddled between the mattress and the wall.

It was only a few minutes they were in the house, I suppose, but to me it figured up a whole bunch of eternities. And when, the stranglers having ridden away to a safe distance, the Mormons came in and helped me out of the stifling smother of my hiding-place, I found the entire family frightened almost speechless.

Indeed, the good woman whose quick wit had saved me had not much more than consoled herself by fainting away, than Mrs. Mormon No. 2 cried: "Why, man; your head has sure turned white!" As, in truth, I was astounded to find it had.

More than once heretofore I have had occasion to admit that I have never been able to come up to the confronting of a danger without being possessed by an awful sense of scare at the first clatter of trouble, however coolly I might contrive to jump into the middle of it later.

And it is up to me now to admit that the visit of those three stranglers gave me far and away

the worst scare of my life; perhaps because I was so comparatively helpless, still feverish and sorely weakened by my wounds.

Nevertheless, it would have been anything but healthy for them to pull the bed quilts off me, for all the time they were prowling around the house I lay with one of my pistols on my breast and the other in my right hand, at full cock both.

The worst wounds heal sometime — when they don't do for you the first rattle out of the box — and finally a day came that I was able to mount and ride away, and it became the occasion of about as severe a test of my manhood as any I have had to confront.

Being a poor man, my Mormon host had only three wives, but that little three of a Mormon kind was quite adequate to demonstrate how difficult the Mormons find it to maintain a satisfactory majority of contentment and happiness among a plurality of helpmeets. At least, so it seemed to me.

Anyway, the fact is that Mrs. Mormon No. 1, the dear woman whose wit saved me from a probably fatal conflict with the stranglers, appeared to have conceived an attachment for me that, while appreciated, had certainly not been courted.

For all through the years of my wanderings the mischievous face of the Michigan maid who had outlawed me was ever before me. The flame the little forest imp had lighted in my heart still burned as fiercely as in the days I used to pass Bessie McVicker on our woodland paths, although

I had not heard from her in all those years, for to communicate with home I had not ventured.

Moreover, my Mormon host was protected from any poaching by me in yet another way; for while, to be sure, I had paid him liberally for the shelter he had afforded me, I was not one to deal treachery to a man whose salt I had eaten.

Thus when, inspired measurably by a real attachment for me, but very likely in still larger measure by her disgust of her situation in that household, No. 1 begged me to carry her away with me, I was placed in a dilemma of the worst sort; for it was really to her more than to all the others I owed my escape.

And when at length I rode away alone, it was with a sore heart for a weary woman to whom I certainly owed a heavy unpaid debt.

After a most painful journey, for I was still weak and suffering from my wounds, riding into the suburbs of Salt Lake late one afternoon, I saw a man playing in his garden with a group of children in a hearty sort of way that inspired me to believe I might trust him.

So dismounting and introducing myself, I frankly told him my story, and asked him to give me asylum. And once again I found my judgment proved trustworthy, for he took me in, rigged me up a bed in his cellar, and for two months fed me up and nursed me back to strength.

From their kinfolk, the Kimballs, my host got the address of Dr. Johnson and his wife, and they

used to come and visit me of nights and were very kind.

But they told me frankly they just could not pay me the additional four thousand dollars they had promised, for, after our escape, the Green River thugs had completely looted his tent and wagons and had ruined him.

So, still having left a few hundreds of the thousand they had paid me, a bigger cargo of money than I was accustomed to packing away, I told them to forget it, and promised that I would also.

At that time Mormon hatred of Gentiles was fierce as ever, and any Gentile frequenters of the Salt Lake saloons indiscreet enough to flash a fat roll of money were lucky to escape no worse than robbery at the hands of the police of the city.

Miners from the near-by diggings, or *en route* east from the Alder Gulch or Nevada camps, were the principal victims. Robberies and murders by the police were of at least weekly occurrence. It was mind your eye for Gentiles walking Salt Lake streets of nights in those days.

But while my confinement in hiding in my host's cellar became almost intolerable, only at night was it prudent for me to go abroad, for the Green Riverites had hung up a reward for my head big enough to make it feel to me mighty unsafe.

— XIII —

EXIT COX

ONE dark night, I slipped out of Salt Lake headed for Spanish Fork, to whose Mormon bishop I had a letter. And that I was able to leave especially well mounted and armed was due to the kindness and generosity of a lady, then sixteen, now presiding with dignity over one of the finest mansions in Salt Lake and noted far and wide for her noble charities.

What with doctors' bills and extra heavy subsidies to my host, to make sure he did not betray me for the reward out for me, dead or alive, had brought my funds uncomfortably low, although how *she* found it out I never could imagine.

But learn or suspect it she did, and, God bless her, insisted on mounting and arming me as I had never been outfitted before.

When we parted, the evening before my departure, she begged me to return for her whenever the hue and cry for my scalp should subside, and vowed she would wait for me — and it's a million to one I would have gone back for her, let rewards and hue and cry be what they might, but for my devotion to my maid of the Michigan woodlands.

For next to Bessie McVicker, she was the one

woman I have ever met who might have won me from my wild wanderings and run no risk letting me out of the home pasture without hobbles.

After leaving Spanish Fork I passed on through Beaver toward the mines. Shortly before reaching White Pine, Nevada, I came upon a lake, surrounded by fine hay meadows, took possession of it, and turned to making hay.

I still had a little money left, and as plenty of men were travelling the road who needed work, I was able to put up several fine stacks.

Finally, my cash resources converted into hay, I rode into Shermantown to market it. The quartz mills were in full blast, times booming — but I lacked the ready to move a single load of hay.

I found no difficulty, however, in making a deal with a local merchant to provide the funds needed to move my hay to town. And barely was the last load delivered than a severe early autumn storm came on, catching over three hundred mules in town. That enabled my merchant partner, who was to manage sales, to dispose of the lot at sky-high prices.

Of the proceeds, I only drew what I needed for expenses, my partner depositing the balance in his own name in the Bank of Nevada.

Since in Nevada I was going under another name than my own, I had felt tolerably safe. But my sense of security was soon rudely broken when, shortly after my arrival in Shermantown, a friend told me one of the Green Riverites, who had been

a participant in my fight to rescue Dr. Johnson, was in Hamilton, a small mining camp distant two and a half miles from Shermantown, and that I had been recognised and could be sure he would be making a call on me.

The man's name was Sam Turner, himself a hard man with five notches on his gun. And since I also learned that in our fight he had received a shot in the stomach not likely to inspire him with much love of me, I engaged a man to watch his movements and report them to me, and kept my own eyes a plenty peeled.

Nothing happened for a few days, not until one morning my scout advised me that Sam was in town, getting his mule shod at the blacksmith shop, making as good an opportunity as one could ask to arrange our differences.

As I entered the smithy, Sam stood by the forge, holding his mule, and I noted the Winchester I had been told he always carried he had incautiously left near the door.

"Sam," I remarked as I entered, "you know we have both been hurt. Personally, I don't want any more trouble. Let me alone and I will be only too glad to let you alone."

As I was speaking, I had noticed his eyes shifting calculatingly toward his rifle, and added, "You'll never reach it, Sam. I've come in good faith to beg you to call quits with me; you can afford it if I can."

"Do you mean it, honest?" he answered; "I heard you'd been threatening to kill me on sight."

"Nonsense, Sam, I'm as tired of fighting and hiding as you yourself ought to be," I assured him. "Before all these people I promise never even to speak ill of you, and here's my hand on it." We shook, and met frequently thereafter in peace.

But my stay in Shermantown was brief. In a few weeks I was forced out on the road again. My ill-luck at trying to accumulate a little stake never quit my trail. And there in Nevada, it was almost the impossible that happened. The Bank of Nevada broke — ruining my merchant partner, as well as stripping me of my share of the hard-won hay money.

It came pretty tough on me, of course, but I was so used to blows of that sort that I lost no time mourning over it. Instead, having my outfit left and a little grub, I pulled out for the Patterson district, and there remained prospecting until my flour and sowbelly gave out, when again it was pike for me.

And for once fortune smiled, to the extent of passing me a good job and bringing me again into comradeship with my old preceptor, George Cox.

Quite by chance, I ran into the expedition of Lieutenant George M. Wheeler, marching south to engage in survey work along the boundary line between Arizona and Nevada. With him I found Cox, employed as horse-shoer, and was myself engaged as chief packer, in charge of forty pack mules.

Most of Wheeler's work was in and along the

Grand Cañon of the Colorado River, the first survey and about the first exploration of it ever made, and for all of the party it was a season of extraordinary hardship, always on scant water and short feed for our beasts, much of the time in heat Death Valley itself could not badly discount.

And since our field was in then hostile Navajo country, and the expedition was a government affair, we had a cavalry escort, an escort that ultimately gave us more trouble than the Indians — or, rather, some of the escort did.

Unknown to the lieutenant, among the enlisted men of the escort were three notorious bandits, enlisted under assumed names in escape of a pursuit for their crimes.

The worst of them was known as " Johnny Behind the Rock," as cold-blooded an assassin as any those lawless days developed.

A few weeks before their enlistment, they had held up a Mormon wagon train on the road from Beaver to White Pine, killing several of the men, looting the wagons. Hard pressed by the Mormons, they had sought service in the army for sanctuary.

But birds of their vulture feather could not long repress their predatory bent, much less abide the restraint of army discipline, and no more were we a week's march south of the Mormon settlements and near the Arizona border than the three of them dropped into their old tricks.

They jumped one night with all the mules of

our pack-train—set the entire expedition afoot, as far as transport of supplies was concerned.

And that was where old Cox and I got into action again together (and for the last time, as it turned out), although the pursuit of them in that terrible desert land was not a diversion we were hankering after.

Lieutenant Wheeler detailed us to trail them and recover the mules; and since neither of us had ever balked at an order of our commanding officer in the old service, we thought it was too late to begin.

Helped by the unlimited change of mounts they were driving along with them, and with almost a full night's start of us, we knew it was useless to chase them at a racing pace.

So we took their trail at an easy jog, much as if we were starting in to walk down a band of wild horses, confident of dropping in on them whenever they got far enough away to feel safe in breaking their racing flight and taking longer and less carefully guarded rest.

West they bore, and on after them we followed, at the best pace our horses could maintain and not wear them out; on through infernal desert heat, stifled by constant sand storms, our lips cracked and swollen and throats parched for the water we seldom got; on for six days and nights, with only such intervals of rest as our beasts absolutely needed.

But at last, one evening, from the bluffs above, we saw them pushing out into Death Valley from

the sink of Furnace Creek, and planned to strike them at the midnight rest camp they were sure to make in the desert.

The night favoured us with a quarter moon, that enabled us to follow their trail at a good gait that had brought us within less than a mile of them by the time they had lighted a little fire to boil their coffee.

By half an hour later they had fallen to us easy.

Stalking them gingerly through the darkness, the moon having gone down, we actually stepped into the fire-light and had them covered before they realised trouble was impending.

And when Cox quietly remarked, "Mr. Johnny Behind the Rock, I believe," the thug growled:

"No; not this evenin'; it's Johnny Under a Rope, I reckon"; and all three quit, gave up, without any try for a struggle. Of which peaceful surrender we were none too glad, for they had given us such a cruel hard chase that we would have welcomed an excuse to put them where they could do no more harm.

And by the way those coyotes yelped and whimpered by turns on the long return journey to Wheeler's camp, I think they would have found death a relief from the punishment we gave them.

With abundant fresh mules to shift saddle to, we not only raced back with scarcely any rest, but compelled the three to make the entire journey without their saddles, each with hands bound behind his back and lashed astride of a bareback

mule. It was Johnny on a Saw Horse for our bandit and his mates on that trip.

In fact, the Wheeler expedition was the dryest and about the poorest counterfeit of a picnic it has been my misfortune to get mixed up with. Few weeks passed that some of us did not get grilled in one way or another.

Late in the season, Lieutenant Wheeler and Lieutenant Lockwood, who later perished on the De Long arctic expedition, near the mouth of the Lena River, had their turn, while we were working out the maze of profound gorges west of the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, a waterless region hot as the devil's pet furnace.

One night the pair of them did not return to camp, nor by morning had they appeared, notwithstanding we kept a big signal fire burning on a tall butte above the camp and fired signal shots for them at intervals throughout the night.

Plainly they must be lost, or victims of some accident, for the country was so dry that we were out of any usual range of the Navajos. Whatever the untoward happening, they were bound to be in desperate straits, for they had left camp with a single canteen apiece.

So at dawn, as soon as it was light enough to see, I took their trail alone, carrying several filled canteens; no use taking any of our escort, for, after finding them, the whole problem was one of water.

Their trail was easily enough picked up, and I followed it at a gallop for several hours, bar oc-

casional jogging to rest my horse, leading off generally into the south, winding down into abysmal gorges, climbing lofty butte crests, on still south until I came to a semi-flinty clay formation much like the floor of the Dakota Bad Lands, so hard, I believe, that not even a loose locomotive would leave any sign crossing it.

A wide cross-cut to east and west of the point their trail entered this flinty-floored region failed of showing me any sign they had returned north.

So it was right ahead of me they had gotten tangled up in that infernal formation, where, their mule hoofs leaving no sign, once they got lost it was stay lost for keeps, back-tracking being utterly impossible.

I may as well admit it took about all the guts I could muster to pass on out upon the flint, for they were both as capable men as I, and if they could get lost there, so could I.

But out there somewhere, and very likely not far away, my chiefs were doubtless perishing for water, their lives forfeit if I failed them. So on I bore another hour and a half, as nearly a south course as I could keep.

The country such a maze of winding main and side cañons that one was boxing the compass every few hundred yards, but I went on, in hope of reaching soft formation where I could pick up their sign.

But no use; as far as I could see ahead stretched the pale grey-dun of the flint formation! So the afternoon I spent on a big circle that carried me

another hour to the south, working from one ridge top to another, spying out the gorges as well as I could, shooting now and then, but without result.

Night come, I took to the tallest butte near, there built and fed throughout the night a signal fire, occasionally firing a pistol shot.

By morning my own condition was desperate, my horse cruelly drawn of flank by thirst, incapable of carrying me more than two or three hours at the most through the stress of the blazing morning sun.

And then, the horse dead beat, all the water I carried could no more than suffice to support one man back to camp, travelling afoot — in event he was able to keep a true course through the mazes that must be crossed.

Having still my bit of nerve left, I followed a ridge crest that led west two or three miles to a twin butte of the one I had spent the night on.

Fortunately, I was to be well rewarded; for, come to the butte's summit, my sharp questing eyes soon picked up four still, dark figures at the bottom of a deep ravine that lay at the foot of its south slope, partly sheltered beneath a projecting ledge from the blazing sun.

Leaving my horse staked where there was a bit of browsing, and moistening his throat with a meagre swallow from one of the canteens, I slung the others over my shoulder, and clambered down to what I feared would prove a bunch of dead ones.

But on nearing them I was delighted to hear a feeble hail that took me the remaining distance in long bounds.

It only needed a glance to see that they were pretty well across the crest of the last divide of life, the two mules down, weakly panting, the two lieutenants gaunt, wild-eyed and incapable of connected speech.

But when, presently, the water revived them, there was no particular story they had to tell of their mishap, except that, venturing out across the flint, they had become rattled, had lost all sense of direction, and had wandered aimlessly on and on until, their slender supply of water gone, their beasts spent and themselves incapable of further effort, they had laid down within the shelter of the ledge.

My little lot of food and water did not last long with that parched and famished pair, although up to reaching them I had hardly touched either, and while I myself, I realised, was incapable of covering half the distance back to camp without water, the two lieutenants were too weak to march a mile.

Thus I figured our only hope lay in signalling our position, on the chance another search party might come near. Cox, I knew, would never let me die out there on the flint without a man's effort to get to me.

And so it proved. I scrambled laboriously back to the butte crest and started a tiny fire, now and then throwing up smoke signals. By mid-after-

noon Cox slipped up on me out of a deep gorge to the west, so quietly that I only noted his approach when my ear caught the clink of mule shoes on the flint.

As usual, moreover, he had overlooked no bets, for he was driving ahead of him four spare mules bearing a little food and decorated with canteens until they looked like a betasselled Andean *récua.* And back to our camp the canny old scout led us, straight as a crow flies.

For this rescue Cox and I were given honourable mention to the Secretary of the Interior by Lieutenant Wheeler, and, what shortly came far more handy to us, we were paid a handsome bounty for the capture of Johnny Behind the Rock and the recovery of the government mules — handy because we needed it for a sudden getaway.

In Pioche for supplies, with several of the escort and ourselves dressed in army blue, Cox and I happened to be near when one of our men was attacked by six men, artists at both hard and soft touches, ready enough to kill where they found a bank roll they could not get with a wheedle or a cheat.

No more was the row started than Cox received a stray shot in the shoulder. Then we agreed it was about time to take a hand ourselves, with the result that when, a few seconds later, the battle was over and Cox and I were safely away, two lay dead under a wagon and three were hunting a doctor.

While the affair was purely one of self-defence, Pioche was no good place to stand trial, so we felt forced to take French leave of Lieutenant Wheeler's expedition and burn the Ruby Valley trail for Elko.

And this Pioche business proved the last transaction of the old firm of Peach, Cox & Stocking, for at Elko Cox and I parted, never to meet again, luckily for me.

Cox, I am sorry to have to record, captured a few years later with a big string of government mules whose possession he could not satisfactorily explain, was shot by a platoon of black troopers by order of General Hatch; an end I had long felt his desperate, utterly reckless character was sure to bring him to sooner or later.

But of Cox it is only truth to add that his entire career bore infinitely more to his credit than to his discredit, for throughout the many years he was ranging the vast wild region east and west of the Rockies, no single man of the vanguard of the old frontier annually harvested a bigger crop of thoroughly bad men than did he.

Continuing west to the Pacific, after parting with Cox at Sacramento, I bought an interest in a small business with the proceeds of the mule bounty Lieutenant Wheeler had paid me. And what do you think? Inside of six weeks my little show burned to the ground, leaving me nearly as flat strapped as had my previous ventures in wood, meat shooting, and hay!

So perhaps some one can explain how I might

escape the wandering life, but I doubt it. Surely, I tried hard enough, but no more would I get a new set of pegs driven than pop would go the tent ropes and out on another long trail I'd be driven.

Thus the spring of 1869 found me trailing east again, bound for Montana. Fort Benton, which I had picked as my destination, at practically the head of navigation of the upper Missouri, had then for many years been the most important and famous Indian trading-post and centre of distribution of merchandise for the big mining camps lying to the west of it.

It was still in high prosperity, its then principal peltry trade being in buffalo robes and skins of the big grey wolves that followed the vast buffalo herds in thousands, fattening on their young and on carcasses left by the red hunters.

The buffalo robes were then chiefly the product of the chase of the wild tribesmen, the Bloods, Blackfeet, Crees, Piegans, for which roving white traders exchanged powder and lead, whisky and blankets, at what I am afraid would now be regarded as scandalously high profits.

Still, in a way they earned big money, for war parties of young bucks were always out that few trading outfits escaped paying heavy toll to.

But most of the wolves fell to " wolfers," small bands of white hunters who traded with the tribes as opportunity offered and put in the rest of their time trapping and poisoning wolves. Sometimes they shot buffaloes and poisoned their carcasses,

but preferably, where there was timber, they bored shallow holes in logs and filled the holes so made with tallow lightly charged with strychnin.

Wolfing looked good to me and in it I engaged, the first season bringing in to Benton eleven hundred wolf-skins and all the buffalo robes I could pack.

Two more seasons I ranged between Benton and the Whoop-Up country as a wolfer and trader, with now and then a brush with some raiding war party, and with, at last, such good luck that in 1871 I was able to make a start down river on the steamer *Far West* with a little capital that reached rather comfortably into four figures.

The boat was crowded with a mixed company that included several ladies, a lot of my wolfing friends, and a young army captain who came near forcing me to win promotion for some of his juniors — for he challenged me to a duel which I am afraid he would not have lived long enough to regret, if it had come off.

He had been in command of Fort Benton for two years, and the dignity of his rank and command had led him to esteem himself a lot higher than anybody else did. In fact, he was not content to plainly show his contempt for all of us of the trading and wolfing guild, but lost no chance to say abusive things that surely seemed meant to hurt and provoke us.

So when, one day at dinner, he was loudly declaiming that during his two years' command at

Benton he could not remember meeting a single civilian he regarded as a gentleman, I could not help quietly remarking, "There goes a kick from a government mule that ought to be branded 'I. C.!'" "I. C." signifying "inspected and condemned," as unfit for service.

The roar of laughter that went up from our party of diners so infuriated the captain that he left the table and challenged me to go ashore at the next landing and fight him, and while I should have been glad to get out of it, I saw no recourse but to accept.

But Montana was all on the good side of luck for me in this duel affair. So much so that when the boat stopped for fuel at the Painted Woods, and the hostile captain was the first to start ashore over the gang-plank, *somehow* an end of the plank slipped and down it he tobogganed into the swirling, muddy current of the river!

Fished out by the deck-hands to a chorus of delighted yells from most of the men aboard, he strode dripping and cursing to his cabin, while I went ashore with my war-sack and other belongings, and there stopped for the next boat, to avoid chance of further trouble with him.

Arrived at Bismarck, Dakota, I found it yet another Cheyenne, run by a gang of sure-thing hold-ups and thugs, for the place was all abustle with the first big rush of settlers into that section of the northwest, and wherever tenderfeet were thickest thugs throve fattest.

Still, it struck me as a good place for the em-

ployment of my wolf money, so I built and opened a hotel there, taking as a partner a married man whose wife could run the kitchen end of the show, as I was not flattering myself that my life in moving-camp had trained me to win any prizes as a fancy-dish designer.

And there, too, I soon got so often and so much occupied with other people's troubles that I seldom had much time to run a hotel, or, indeed, any business that called for camping on its safety-valve. One or two incidents will be sufficiently typical of my life in Bismarck.

An old acquaintance of mine named Hayes, in a fight got the better of one of the tough fraternity, and, beset by a crowd of his victim's friends, he took refuge in a gambling house, from which roisterers and players quickly fled as the mob began surrounding the building.

While not a close friend of mine, the odds were so heavy against Hayes I felt I ought to take a hand, but it could not help my hotel business any to antagonise the mob. Strategy, rather than any head-on, butt-in, must be the play, and, happily, I lighted on a winner.

And yet the strategy was very simple. After having fetched near at hand the fastest team in town, hitched to a light buggy, I sent two men in front of the gambling house ordered to empty their pistols rapidly; and the moment the guards from the rear and sides had run to the front, I kicked in the rear door, got Hayes out, rushed him into the waiting buggy, and whipped away.

That was all. Sure enough tiny dust clouds flew up thick around us, but none of their shots scored.

In three days I had landed Hayes safely in Fort Rice, and was back at my hotel in Bismarck, where the gang lost no more than a day or two picking a bruiser they believed able to beat me to a finish. A crowd of them invaded the bar of my hotel, locked the doors, and, before I realised what was up, the slugger was at me.

But, my training under Peach and later practice on my own account, made it no difficult matter for me to knock their champion so nearly into the great thereafter that he was a matter of three hours getting back.

One season about did for me in the hotel business, strapped me of most all I had except the building and the lot it occupied — my losses due in about equal parts, I imagine, to my own neglect or lack of training for the game and to the lack of scruple in my partner.

Still, I was not grieving any over my losses, for I was thoroughly tired of life in town and wanted to be hitting the trail again so bad I reckon I'd have made them a present of the hotel if they had not contrived to possess themselves of it a short time before I reached a frame of mind to give it to them.

In the matter of weather, my next move proved to be most uncomfortably ill-timed. It was a little trading expedition, started late in the fall to Fort

Stevenson, a small post on the Missouri eighty-five miles above Bismarck.

A not unimportant item of the goods carried consisted of the equivalent of two barrels of whisky, contained in a lot of small kegs, or rather, to be wholly truthful, the equivalent of only one barrel of whisky.

For with the doubly-prudent purpose of making sure the Stevenson soldiers should not hazard their health drinking too high proof spirits, and that I should run no chance of loss on the trading expedition, I must confess I had, by discreet dilution, expanded one barrel to two.

Arrived at the post, I soon made a good sale of the whisky to a sergeant and got it safely stowed, but before I had time to engage in any further trading I was summoned by the officer of the day to appear shortly before the commanding officer.

Suspecting this could only mean inquiry respecting my contraband whisky, and having noted signs of the near approach of a heavy storm, sure that season to bring snow, I was trotting my team swiftly out of town inside of ten minutes.

And none too quick was my move, for while I had pressed my team to top speed as soon as out of sight of the garrison, from a hill-crest that I crossed shortly before nightfall I could see a detail of cavalry galloping on my trail.

But I was not fearing them, for in another ten minutes night enveloped me, and with it came a

whirling smother of snow, more of a blizzard than the troopers were likely to face.

The storm soon developed a blizzard no living man could long face and live. To lose one's self on those bald prairies meant certain death.

My winters on the upper Missouri had taught me caution, so the moment I found difficulty in keeping the road, I pulled out to one side into a shallow swale and unhitched my team.

Then, first tramping a rather narrow circle in the snow, I covered my mules with buffalo robes, and throughout the long hours of the night tramped round my saving circle, leading the beasts.

It was the only way to save them and myself from freezing, and stick to it and pull through we did.

The next day I managed to wallow through to Painted Woods, and there lay several days, resting and thawing out my frost-bites.

Returned to Bismarck, I was preparing to pull out for new fields, when an incident happened that served to hasten my departure. A widow whom I knew well and respected, appealed to me for protection against a dissolute character named Barker, who had been persistently annoying her with his attentions, calling frequently of evenings and threatening to break in when she denied him admission.

Knowing the thoroughly bad character of the man, I suggested that I would call early that evening, on the chance he might appear later and give

me an opportunity to throw the fear of God into him.

But, as so often occurs in life, it was the unexpected that happened. That evening he stole up to the house early, caught her unawares, and was inside before she realised he was near. A few minutes later his ear caught the crunch of my feet upon the snow as I approached.

Noticing a trap-door leading into a cellar, he slid through it, threatening her with death if she revealed his hiding-place.

Entering at her prompt answer to my knock, I remarked, "Well, missey, the sooner your friend Barker calls now the better," before noticing that she stood with finger on lips and eyes glued to a spot on the floor behind me.

Turning, I was just in time to make a lightning side-leap, as that trap-door suddenly raised and an out-thrust pistol blazed at me. But, too old a bird at the game to give any man a second chance at me, before he could fire again I had my pistol-barrel in his ear and persuaded him to back up, or rather down, into the cellar.

Then, getting the widow to fetch me nails and a hammer, I nailed him safely within his retreat.

And safe though she was at the moment, so thoroughly terrorised had she become of the ruffian that she insisted on leaving me on guard of the house while she hurried down town in search of a buyer for her effects.

And when, within an hour, she returned to an-

nounce her traps disposed of, I put her on the midnight train, bound east.

Directly the train departed, I went back to her house and freed Barker from his cellar prison.

I had rather hoped the several hours he had passed there in cold storage would have lowered the temperature of his rage to a safe degree. But when I let him out and told him the widow had jumped the town, he showed so warlike it cost me about twenty dollars for drinks to mollify his wrath to a point I dared leave him — safe he would not be tracking and bushwhacking me.

And to make quite sure of avoiding further trouble with him, I myself took a train early the next forenoon for Fort Garry, now Winnipeg.

— XIV —

WILD-AND-WOOLLY WIN

ONE more venture in business I made on my own account, and it has remained about the last up to this day and hour. Whatever else I may have been cut out for, certainly it was not for a business man. I never kept any books — never had enough money or business doings that, put in a bunch of books, it wouldn't take a week's keen scouting to trail up the figures and find where they were set down.

If I could flash up book records I'm afraid they would prove me such an easy mark, as a rule, that more of a laugh would be started than I would enjoy listening to.

Anybody and everybody that had their shins barked against hard luck, could touch me for my loose change.

The natural result was that I was never long burdened with any jags of spare coin. And whenever I did manage to turn any one down, it was often resented as an unwarranted breach of the rules of my easy game, and got me into trouble.

Fort Garry was the field of my last commer-

cial exploit. I bought twenty acres of land a mile out of town that to-day is in the business centre of Winnipeg and worth all the money any one ought to be allowed to have.

Only it is not mine now. On it I built a hotel and road-house. Trade came fast enough. Another would have grown rich there, and, I suppose, got along in peace.

But not me. I had too big a reputation as a fighter, that made me a prize the many handy bruisers then on the frontier were keen to take down. Indeed, the house was not long open until I got called down.

At the time, the top-sawyer of the local fistic fraternity was a man named Walsh. One day he blew in and intimated he would appreciate credit for a liberal allowance of fluid, of some well-known trouble-starting brand.

Knowing him for a wholly worthless ruffian that never had a kind word or hand for any one, dangerously ugly in his cups, I gave him the high sign of "nothing doing."

Meeting him in town a few days later, he abused me a lot more than I usually stand and demanded a fight; so abused me, in fact, that I would probably have taken him on then and there but for the fact that the Canadian police were overlooking no chances to arrest and fine Americans.

Thus, when shortly the Fullerton Brothers, two of the élite of the Canadian punch artists, came and offered to second the pair of us if I would

give Walsh a go, and assured me against police interference, I was not slow to assent.

Sleigh load after sleigh load came jingling up to my place the night of the fight, until my 40 × 60-foot dance hall was so packed that scant room was left for the ring.

Stripped to trunks and buckskin moccasins, Walsh and I shook hands and squared up to each other.

While I had the advantage of him by perhaps twelve pounds, he was about the most shifty and clever man with his hands I ever tackled, and tough as hickory.

It was a fight to a finish, barehanded, for in those good old gruelling days gloves were as little known and used as shifting, side-stepping, ducking or clinching.

It was stand up to each other and slug, give and take, until one was down for keeps. And so at it we went.

Details? Well, in these finicky days they would not make pretty reading, the incidents of that fight; they would turn the black ink of my publisher too red.

Suffice it to say that when, after a full thirty minutes of the fiercest battling, my opponent got back from the farther end of Queer Street and the fight was awarded to me, both were completely done. We were scarcely able to stand.

I still owned the presence of mind and voice to order my bottle pusher to throw champagne into the bunch, which started the ball rolling so

profitably that my house took in eight hundred dollars before the sleigh-bells resumed jingling.

The few remaining weeks of that winter left me over-fed of hotel-keeping, for I found it a life rather fuller of battling than any of my previous experiences.

And yet, try as I then did, and often have, to escape a life of violence, for me to this hour there have never been periods of more than brief and always armed truce.

Few, indeed, are the mouthfuls of bread that have sustained me that I have not literally battled for.

Still, in precisely those days of the winning of the Far West from savagery, and its pacification, I don't know that my experience was so widely different from that of most others. It was a job that never would have been accomplished without plenty of powder and lead and at which few men lasted long who were either sparing or careless in their use. It was either battle or quickstep back east of the Missouri, where most disputes begin and end in a talking match.

Speaking of the East, it was there at Fort Garry that I could scarcely resist the temptation to slip back into Michigan, on the chance of at least news of Bessie McVicker.

But the memory of the still, white face of Tom Harper, whom I had left stretched beside the sap-trough, made me conclude it healthier to stick among the unenlisted ranks of the vanguard of the frontier.

So I had to go on contenting myself with my dreams of the old Ionia County maple forest where I had last seen Bessie.

The break-up of the ice found me paddling down the Saskatchewan, bound on a season's hunt for the Hudson Bay Company. And there in the far north I remained nearly two years — the two most happily peaceful years of my life — shooting bear, moose, elk and carabou, trapping otter, beaver and mink, for their pelts.

But two winters in the unremitting bitter cold and ghastly long nights of the Land of Little Sticks so far sufficed me, that the autumn of 1874 I drifted south to Sioux City, burdened with a comfortably fat bank roll, the proceeds of my two seasons' trapping.

There one night, while I stood in a dance hall watching a lot of pretty wild human animals go round, I was robbed of all my savings, except a few dollars in loose change.

While not entirely certain, I felt very sure of the culprit; but, being a stranger in the town and wanting to avoid any personal difficulty, I consulted a policeman outside the place.

The only consolation I received was a surly, "You look big enough; why don't you go in and get your money yourself? But don't say anything to any one, or you're apt to get plucked again."

The advice struck me as good. I went in and, presently, found my man. He had retired to an upper room of the house. When I got through with him, he did not have much in the way of

clothes on, or of unbroken skin, for that matter.

But I recovered my eight hundred dollars.

Returning to the street and my success reported to the policeman, he suggested that perhaps his advice might possess the value of a drink, and we strolled away together.

But suddenly, when we came within the shadows of the town hall and no one was near, he pushed his pistol in my face and told me he believed he could take care of my roll better than I could.

The sheer cold nerve of the man nearly took my breath away for a second, but I came to in time to knock him down and snatch his pistol. Then I legged it for the train in jack-rabbit jumps.

Following, he caught me just as I was hopping aboard a freight, but a shot tumbled him off on one side and a jump landed me in the darkness on the other side — whence I kept on going, without stopping to make any inquiries about the policeman, until I reached the vicinity of Salt Lake.

And there I wintered, in Bingham Cañon.

The year of 1875 and the spring of 1876 I passed wolfing and trading again in Montana. And I suppose it was only my absence in the remote Whoop-Up country that kept me out of the Rosebud and Little Big Horn battles, one or both, for I would sure have been out scouting for the troops if I had known the campaign was on.

Before midyear, I had again dropped down river from Fort Benton to Bismarck, where I joined a bull train bound for the Black Hills, into

which a mad rush of gold-seekers was then on, pouring in over the Cheyenne, Sidney and Bismarck stage roads.

When I reached Deadwood, the deep, pine-clad gulch that held the camp was seething with a wild, roistering throng that carried me back to the best of the old California days.

The slopes were pitted by prospect holes and dotted with yellow dumps.

Those were the days of Wild Bill Hickok. In fact, a few days later that indomitable gun artist met the fate few of the trigger squeezers escaped.

The camp was wide open.

That autumn the Cheyennes were raiding through the hills, sometimes almost into the camp. None of the outlying camps was safe, and few wood chopping or hay cutting outfits got back unscarred.

One brush I had was a busy one. Four of us were on a trip down Whitewood Gulch, below Crook City, prospecting for a hay claim, when hi-yi-ing past us came a small Cheyenne war party driving thirty horses they had looted from Crook.

We took a chance and went into action, and finally stampeded the Indians and captured the stolen horses. But, as usual, the Cheyennes took their toll, for they were fighters you could never be sure were dead until you saw the buzzards eating them. We lost half of our little party of four.

When the Indians were finally in full flight and we following and shelling them, one we had bowled

over, with both legs and one arm broken, who was crawling toward cover as we passed, rolled flat on his back, and, resting his gun on an updrawn knee, shot and killed two of our mates. But his scalp decorated Ed Morran's saloon for I don't know how long thereafter.

During the two years I remained in the Black Hills I was kept busy at good jobs, first as deputy sheriff under Seth Bullock, later as stage messenger, or treasure guard, principally on C. W. Carpenter's stage route between Deadwood and Bismarck, whose coaches were usually laden with thousands in gold bullion.

Many were the affairs I had with the bandits that swarmed about such rich picking, but not once, I can truthfully say, did I lose to them a dollar of my charge.

Just good luck, probably, for a number of times they jumped me under conditions it was mighty hard to beat.

With the incidents of these affairs I shall not weary the reader, for of their general nature my fight while guarding the South Pass stage, already described, is sufficiently typical.

Early in 1878 I left the Bismarck route and served with Boone May on the Cheyenne stage line. I was with him in February of that year in one of his hottest fights when, with a heavy cargo of treasure aboard, old Gene Barnett, pulling the ribbons over six, and the author of this book on the box alongside of Gene, we were jumped in the brush lining the Old Woman's Fork of the Chey-

enne River, south of Jenny's Stockade. But Boone May's part in that show the author has told elsewhere, and I'll not tire the reader with mine.

My old rascally hunting partner, Jack Watkins, turned thoroughly bad, was then operating on that line, but the hope I nursed of a whack at him to even our old score was not realised.

Shortly thereafter Watkins disappeared out of the ken of all of us who had known him in the Northwest. Years later, I heard he had been recognised in Tombstone, Arizona, but this I have always felt sure was a mistake.

Only death could cure his ilk of their thieving tricks, and his sudden disappearance from the Cheyenne route and failure to reappear elsewhere has left me believing he was planted by Boone May on one of the quiet stalking expeditions by his lonesome for which Boone was famous.

Sensations on that frontier were complex and highly variegated, and they came chasing one another with such kaleidoscopic rapidity and diversity that they knocked dizzy and had going sidewise all but the coolest heads.

And yet it was a life that, while chiefly notable for stirring into hideous action the rawest primeval passions, now and then showed outcroppings, in apparently the most barren human formations, of veins of kindness and tenderness that assayed bonanza values.

"Yeast Powder Bill" was an example.

Doubtless his unique name was very well if not honestly earned by his masterful skill in manipu-

lating a faro box, as for a long time it seemed a foregone conclusion that all players at his layout were certain to have the last cent "raised" out of their pockets and to be themselves done as brown as the loaf they had eaten at breakfast.

As a "raiser" of speculative money, Bill surely stacked up tall among the high priests of the temples of chance.

He had come on the scene accompanied by a young woman, really a lithe, graceful young girl, of rare sweetness and charm. A brief glance at her sufficed to leave one no doubt that she was well bred and raised, and that, notwithstanding her questionable association and raw environment, she was still as clean of mind and heart as while she served as a modest decoration of the Sunday school she could not then have long left.

Yet she it was who nightly occupied the high "lookout" chair at Bill's right elbow, her great blue eyes dreamily fixed on his faro "layout," looking as sadly out of place as would a sky pilot found pushing bar bottles and rinsing glasses.

But that she was not as innocent of knowledge of the duties of her job as she looked, all stakers at their layout soon learned. No breach of faro table etiquette that might work disadvantage to the "house" escaped those dreamily indolent blue eyes.

With her in the lookout chair, there was no sneaking additional chips on a winning card or retiring them from a loser.

And that Bill respected as well as worshipped

her was ever apparent, for any venturing rude behaviour at the table he checked in an icy voice that hinted death for a repetition.

But their game was rarely so disturbed — never, indeed, by any but the irresponsibly drunk — for her cleanness and sweetness were of the obvious sort that never failed of winning respectful consideration of the big majority constituting the rudest circles of the old frontier.

However in the world it could have happened, I'll bet remains to this day a mystery to every living onlooker at that play.

Just Providence it must have been, Providence taking the bit in its teeth and tugging overtime until, with Bill under full control, it had sacked him of his cunning tricks, and had steered him into the straight and narrow path he later proved he could travel creditably.

Anyhow, the fact is, an old party blew in one night who tapped Bill's bank, emptied his safe, and didn't even stop at that; won from the beginning to the end of his play almost without a break of his gait, just as if Bill had been the downiest tenderfoot instead of about the slickest sure-thing artist that ever manipulated "strippers" or pulled "seconds."

A substantial old party he was, whose appearance exuded a promising mixture of prosperity, benevolence and easy-markedness that made his money look like a gift.

But from the start he sure had Bill mesmerised or hoodooed. Looked like he just couldn't

place his money so Bill could take it away from him.

And the wonder grew the more profound among the onlookers as he rapidly developed into a high roller of the attractive sort, whose money, somehow, only the élite of the fraternity know quite how, invariably passes into the till of the squarest "banks."

Bet after bet he won; steadily the chips flowed across the table to him in a seldom interrupted stream.

Meantime the iron-nerved Bill never turned a hair; couldn't tell whether he was winning or losing, until, toward the last, his pale face grew grey.

But not so with the blue-eyed lookout. As, deal after deal, the position of the bank became more precarious, the blue eyes lost their lazy dreaminess, first grew intent with wonder and then hardened into almost fierce concentrated concern.

And when at last Bill quietly announced the bank broke, rose and emptied his safe drawer and proceeded to pass over to the winner the rise of ten thousand dollars, dainty little Blue Eyes looked about ready to fight.

Rigid, still as death, she sat, staring into space, every line of her lovely face set motionless as marble.

Presently she spoke, without shifting her gaze — from what seemed a fixed contemplation of eternity.

"Bill, put me up against a thousand!"

"*You?* Never; not in a thousand years; not against a million!"

"Put me up, Bill; you *can't* lose."

For only an instant Bill reflected, his grey face impassive as stone, but his usually cold eyes blazing on her a burning love, and then he almost whispered:

"I believe you're right; with *you* the stake, dear, I couldn't lose." And then, turning to the winner, who had remained a quiet but close observer of what all present felt was getting mighty close to a tragedy, remarked:

"She's up against a thousand; shall I deal?"

A prompt assent coming from the winner, play was resumed. Every man in the house pushed as close to the table as he could crowd, the room so still one could hear the soft swish of the cards as he slipped them from the box.

Meantime Blue Eyes had not moved except to fix her gaze on the table, a gaze no longer fierce, but eloquent of an agonised anxiety fit to wring tears from the sphinx.

On went the deal, but with the same result as before. Win, Bill could not. Destiny had him; against it he was powerless.

And, of course, at the winner's plunging gait the deal did not last long. Indeed, to us it seemed only a matter of seconds until Bill pushed his box aside and hoarsely whispered:

"Stranger, the girl is yours! But treat her right, or I'll camp on your trail until I've turned

you into crow meat. Stranger, I tempted that girl out of a luxurious home and from the bosom of a refined and loving family, under a promise of marriage that I, God forgive me, have not fulfilled. Forgiveness? I don't deserve it. It's punishment of the cruelest I should be handed."

As he finished, his voice broke into gusty sobs. And the blue eyes were streaming tears when the stranger pushed to Bill across the table a thousand or more of his winnings, without a word.

Fiercely Bill shoved the money back to him, muttering: "Money? Money? What use have I for money now?" And then, turning to the girl:

"Dear, in putting you up, I've staked and lost my very soul on the turn of a card. Forgive me you cannot, but at least your constant prayer shall now be answered, for I shall never throw another card as long as I live," when, sobbing, he bowed his head upon his arms.

Nor was he sobbing alone, for scarred-faced old battlers and vice-marked rounders who, I'll bet, had not given up a tear since childhood, were snuffling in chorus.

Plainly as much affected as any of us, the old plunger stammered to Bill:

"Partner, you — you seem to love this girl a heap."

"Love her?" Bill answered; "I thought I had, but now I realise I didn't, right."

"Would you marry her?"

"Would I? Yes, and gladly die the next min-

ute for the privilege of paying her that much respect, if after what's passed she'd let me," Bill sobbed.

"So? That's right, son," and then, turning to us, the winner of Blue Eyes smilingly queried, "Won't one of you boys hump himself after a parson?"

Entered presently a grave, black-clothed man.

And there, grouped around the faro layout, hats off, heads bowed, cheeks wet, all stood reverently while the parson said the simple service that made Yeast Powder Bill and Blue Eyes man and wife.

Of course, first and last, there was a tolerably large if not always wholly respectable flock of blue eyes in the camp, but never a single pair that would assay half the value of those Bill packed east with him on the next Bismarck coach.

Take Calamity Jane's, for instance; her eyes were blue, but hers is a story "I ain't a goin' to tell."

But there was one other pair that so stirred up the camp and a wide region round about for a time that they deserve a brief record.

It was of a spring morning, rosy, fresh and fragrant as she herself was when she stepped off the box of the Bismarck coach in front of the hotel office — although in a few days the boys were allowing she was a long way from being as verdant as proper spring-day things should be, but in this opinion I never agreed with them.

Blue? Sure, her eyes were blue. But not the dark velvety blue of the lakes that lay close up

under snow-line of the high range; instead, they were always glinting the pale tints of highly tempered steel.

And properly enough, too, for that girl was tempered to an edge that would make the best Toledo blade look like a cross-cut saw.

And dainty? Sure, too; a fluffier, frailer little trick than Bill's. But the way it was cavorting around shortly, busting up society and knocking big dark holes in the scenery, that fluffy trick made it pretty plain she was not sporting any muscles not cushioned on steel springs.

Precisely what elm-lined New England village street she hailed from I don't remember, any more than I could then understand however such an environment had managed to hold her, apparently gentle enough to eat out of your hand, as she seemed when she first invaded Black Hills scenery.

But I fancy it must have been some coast village, hard by a secluded inlet frequented in the old days by Captain Kidd and his be-cutlassed crew, where, won to some crude measure of domesticity by a village belle, one of his red-handed pirates dropped anchor and left the seed of blood so wild that generations had not served to materially temper it in this, his last descendant.

The greatest events of the isolated mining camps of the old frontier were the arrivals of the overland mail coaches.

When the clatter of the galloping six, the creak of thoroughbraces, the "Yip, yip!" of the driver

and the angry snapping of his lash were heard, all business was suspended.

Even gambling stopped. All but the thirstiest left the bars. Everybody crowded round the stage office for a glimpse of anything interesting in the human consignment from the east of the Big Muddy, and, of course, the chief elements of interest in each and every coach-load never wore trousers tucked in their boots.

The day she rolled in I'll never forget. No more will any one else then present, I imagine. Roosted on the box-seat alongside of the giant stature of Tom Cooper, she looked like a young maverick not yet long enough away from its mammy to be thriving extra well on buffalo grass.

For she was just a little wisp of a thing in figure, unsubstantial apparently as a powder-puff. But her face!

Well, it will be about enough to say of her face that it was one that could have married her to every last man in camp, without so much as opening its lips.

Only that was not her lay, as we soon found out.

The rush to win the privilege of helping her down from the box-seat, and the contention for the honour of packing her grip from the stage to the Grand Central Hotel, came near bringing on several killings.

It would have been certain to, but for the fact that where all were contending, one got a grouch

against so many it was hard to fix responsibility for disappointment on any one.

At the hotel she registered as Miss Winifred ——. I remember her name as well as the day I read it on the register, but I'll not give it away, for I have always had a hunch that the big run she got for her money around Deadwood may have let all the worst mischief out of her, and that, once back in whatever Humanyville she came from, she may have settled down, plumb tame.

What her game was, for a few days remained a mystery. The only obvious facts were that none of us won from her the encouragement of a smile, much less a word, and that she was holding repeated conferences with a leading lawyer, at his office, and that circumstance made him as popular and as persistently courted as is a new president by the flock of hungry office-seekers.

Meantime the attentions of the camp annoyed her so that she left the hotel and took shelter under the wing of the parson's wife. For two Sundays, still under the influence of home traditions, she took the class in the feeble stagger at a Sunday-school the parson, by tireless labour, had managed to assemble.

But her life in the log-cabin that served as the parsonage did not last long. And when she did leave she performed a lightning-change act that knocked the camp speechless.

Incredible as it may seem, the truth is that the night of the very same day her business with the

lawyer was concluded, she flew the parsonage coop.

And once out, she never quit fluttering until, shifted to man's rig, blue flannel shirt, trousers tucked in long boots and a full-grown .45 six-shooter buckled round her toy waist, she had perched herself in front of a faro layout and bought a stack of blue chips that took the dealer's breath away.

And before long she had shifted from his rack to her side of the table so many of his chips, and had done it so persistently and easily, that the game seemed to lose interest for her.

Anyway, she cashed in, swaggered up to the bar and ordered drinks for the house — just the proper handsome thing to do after her heavy touch of its faro bank.

That was the one thing needful to convince us her early innocence play was no other than a mask, and that she was a thoroughbred, trained amazingly for one so young, in the highest etiquette of the most exacting frontier society.

To say the house was full don't give an idea of the crowd that actually packed it, and overflowed the neighbourhood as well, the outsiders craning their necks for a glimpse and pricking ears for a phrase of the astounding doings inside.

No one ventured any liberties or even familiarities with her. For by the time she had tossed down at a gulp her first glass of neat whisky, lights were ablaze in those steely eyes that no one

could mistake for an invitation to get gay with her.

Another round of drinks she ordered served, and they were chambered with appreciation and appropriate formalities. And scarcely were the drinks placed where they would do the most harm than, quietly remarking that a certain bottle behind the bar was wearing a disgracefully long neck, she out with the big .45 and nipped it off with as quick and neat a snap-shot as I could have made.

Then it developed that the house held various other articles she disapproved, notably three over-boisterous dance-hall ladies, around whose toes she planted enough lead to determine to her satisfaction whether they could dance as fast as they could talk.

Indeed she got to scattering lead so indiscriminately and impartially around the house that it was soon emptied of all but a few of us old-timers, who rather gloried in her gait and speed.

Of course, all the city peace officers were on hand, but when they made a move to check her pastimes it didn't need much argument from us to convince them that they had best leave her alone.

Finally, her lawyer friend persuaded her she could depend there would be another day coming to her in a few hours, and she went off to bed at the Grand Central.

And she was hardly out of the house before we had her rechristened, although of course we didn't take any chances sending a committee to the

hotel to advise her that thereafter she would be hailed exclusively as Wild-and-Woolly Win.

More to the point of deepest local interest, now that she had so far pulled the blinds off and declared herself, we succeeded in persuading her lawyer to give up to us the little he knew of Win's pedigree. While brief, his yarn was a paralyser.

She was no less than a niece of one of the worst bandits of the Northwest (whose name also, for her sake, I shall withhold) who some time before had been mortally wounded and brought into camp by the sheriff's posse.

Before cashing in, he had entrusted to the lawyer a thousand dollars in bills, his spurs, pistol and belt, along with the name and address of his niece.

Himself an honest man, the lawyer had written her of the legacy — and on she had come to claim it. That was all.

About her own, or her uncle's antecedents or connections, she had been mum.

For something over a month she held the centre of the Deadwood stage. It took her that long to go broke. For, while she gambled nightly, her luck held so phenomenally that she had the banks near buffaloed.

Meantime, most of her talking she did with her six-shooter — talked so often with it that the houses she frequented thinned quickly of the timid the moment she entered.

Of drinking she did little, just enough to keep a keen edge on her temper, apparently. For

women she had no word. In men she took no interest, except as necessary incidents of her gambling and scenery smashing.

Finally the inevitable night came when she couldn't pick a winning card. But, quite as we expected, Win never turned a hair. She played her roll down to the last dollar, handsomely consented to take a night-cap on the house, and smilingly strolled out into the night.

Most of us sat up till dawn trying to figure out what would be the next move, but while all realised that as a sensation artist she was a sizzler, none shot near the mark.

For a few days all we learned was that she had jumped the camp the night she went broke at faro. Then, at length, word came up from Rapid that proved to the most skeptical how hard it is to break the chains of heredity — no less than that she had joined Lame Johnny and was holding up the Sidney stages!

But that was a game that couldn't last long. In a few weeks the pair were captured, Lame Johnny hanged on Cottonwood, and Win brought into Rapid City.

There, the sheriff conceived a punishment for Win, and put it in practice, that proved a stroke of genius. After she had been tossed in a blanket by a gang of men working in industrious relays for half an hour, it turned out that they had managed to so nearly shake all the devilment out of her that she consented to quit the country on the next down coach — to pass on to what fate we never learned.

Of course, a few weeks served to heal up all the Black Hills society and scenery she had damaged, but the years can't run on long enough to drive the memory of Wild-and-Woolly Win from the minds of any who knew her there.

— XV —

DEALING WITH THE DESPERATE

BY the end of 1878, Deadwood and the entire Black Hills region had been so completely cleared of stage-road bandits and town toughs as to hold no more interest for me.

My occupation was gone. My profession, I had almost said, for the guarding of life or some form of property against the attacks of the predatory had come to be no less with me.

The hanging of Lame Johnny on Cottonwood and the virtual tossing of Wild-and-Woolly-Win out of the country in a blanket, were about the last acts of consequence in the local hold-up melodrama.

Thus it was a welcome summons to me when the Cheyenne coach brought me a letter from the Leadville agent of L. Z. Leiter, of Chicago, urging me to report there to him with all speed. And I speeded all right, at the best pace of the return coach.

Arrived there, I learned that the great Iron Silver Mine had been bought by Leiter, but that before his agent could take possession it had been "jumped" by a gang who still remained in possession, working its high-grade ore chutes.

The dispossessing of this gang was the nice little job I had been summoned for.

No matter. Most of the apparently hardest things to do in this world are easy when one goes at them right, and so the capture of the mine proved, notwithstanding twenty-two tough men held it and were boasting they would never give it up.

Partly from the fact that their high-grade ore was so rich, and partly because, doubtless, they were anticipating trouble from the new purchaser, the bulk of their gang was kept down below in the workings.

I lost no time in getting busy. As usual with me, my strategy was not notably complicated. I have always found that when a man wants anything, about the only way worth messing with is to just go and take it, by the straightest route and the most direct method.

Leiter's agent wanted me to raise a war party of thirty men, but I told him that would make a bigger army than I was accustomed to command, and that if he would leave the details to me, I would be ready to turn the Iron Silver mine over to him by the time his underground boss could get his powder bought and drills sharpened.

And I did the trick, with the aid of three other men; but as each of us carried a Winchester and wore two six-shooters, and all four of us were popularly known as such careful economists in their use that little work remained for the doctors after the finish of any shooting match we were

forced to engage in, perhaps the odds against us were not as heavy as at first glance they appeared.

Slipping up behind the shaft house before the day shift was due to turn out, I captured the outworks without firing a shot, and chased the crew down the gulch.

Then I sent a note down in the bucket to the underground gang, ordering them out without any delay or back talk.

Their reply was an invitation, framed in anything but polite terms, to come down and get them, and the assurance that they would welcome a chance to start us on the way to a deeper and hotter pit than that they occupied.

While the answer was annoying, it still had for me immediate value. Its reference to a hotter pit suggested my next move.

First, rushing one of my men into town to buy material to make my word good, I sent down a second note to the underground gang to say that any remaining below after twenty minutes I would smoke out with sulphur.

Did it work? Like a charm. Inside ten minutes we got their hoist signal, and directly thereafter, bucketload by bucketload, received them, disarmed them as fast as they appeared, and set them pounding the trail back to town.

Bruce Hill and the Iron Silver mine were ours; and my work was so far appreciated that through the next year or more Leiter's litigation lasted, I remained captain of the Iron Mine Guard.

Shortly after the Meeker massacre by the Utes, old John Wallace and I took a chance on a trading expedition among Captain Jack's Utes, still rather more than semi-hostile, over on Platon Creek.

That we managed to return with forty-nine horses and four hundred buckskins, we owed exclusively to promises we found ourselves forced to make that we would come back shortly with guns and ammunition.

In the lot of horses we got were several that even the Indians could not ride. But as by that time I had become something of a bronco buster myself, I managed to master them in a way that I believe would have made my old mates, Peach and Cox, proud of me.

After spending the next few months scouting for Captain Lawton around Fort Garland, I was hired by Don McN. Palmer, of Denver, to go with him to Mexico, as guard of his pay-roll and bullion pack trains.

In those years all of central and northern Mexico was quite as unsafe as in actual war times.

Porfirio Diaz had the south fairly well pacified and under control. But in the north lack of communications and facilities for moving troops for some years left it impossible for him to suppress the bandits that, under able leaders, and often in large bodies, were constantly attacking travel on the stage roads, sacking ranches, and even entering the larger towns and levying *prestamos* (enforced "loans") on the wealthier merchants.

Ultimately, Don Porfirio destroyed the last of these bandit organisations, great and small, by a most masterful piece of diplomacy, equal in its brilliancy to the greatest of his victories on the battlefield.

To each of the bandit leaders he sent an invitation to come to the City of Mexico for a conference with him, giving them his word of honour that they should be free to return to their respective fields of industry when they pleased.

All came, nearly a dozen of them, as I remember. To them he gave a banquet in the national palace. The banquet ended, he addressed them, more or less, as follows:

"Gentlemen — you know me. You know I am accustomed to make my word good. I have brought you here to tell you that I now have the south pacified. Now I am free to send half my army against you, if you leave it necessary for me to do so.

"I can, and will, wipe every last one of you off the face of the earth unless you find merit in the alternative I have brought you here to listen to. It will take time, of course; but I have the time — and the men.

"At the best, your occupation is precarious. I can shortly make it impossible, but in doing so I shall have to destroy you. This I do not want to do, and will not, unless you compel it. I prefer you should live and serve the State.

"I have now to propose that each of you sur-

render; that you return to the north and fetch me in your men, all of them.

"Arrived here, I shall organise your forces into regiments of irregular cavalry. You, the leaders, will have the rank and pay of colonels. Your men will be well mounted, armed and paid.

"The new force will be disposed of as occasion demands. If you accept, I shall rely as absolutely on your loyalty as you now may rely on my word. You have until to-morrow to accept or decline."

Don Porfirio's genius won. And from that day to the unhappy finish of his official career, a career that has placed him among the foremost leaders of men and moulders of the destinies of a people of his generation, the *Rurales,* as his ex-bandit cavalry became known, have remained the most loyal and effective organisation of the Mexican army.

Luckily for my job, all this happened after I had left the country.

During the two years I was engaged in guarding shipments of bullion that usually ran high into the thousands in value, first from Palmer's mine, and later from Boss Shepherd's Batopilas mine, to Chihuahua, down through the heavily timbered gorges of the Sierra Madre and out among the mesquite thickets of the central plateau, my guns got warmed up often enough to rob the life of its otherwise hopeless monotony.

But I managed never to lose any of the treasure entrusted to me, and to keep a fairly whole skin.

Few, indeed, were the travellers of those hill trails who got off so luckily, and I believe it was my old friend, Ben Hill, who was the most distinguished example of the other extreme.

He put up a fight the fancy quill drivers would feel bound to call epic, I imagine. Certainly he contrived to acquire more holes in his skin, and to survive them, than most men would regard it any use to try to get over.

Hill's encounter was with one of the bands of Eraclio Bernal, for years the most powerful and ruthless of the bandit chiefs of the Sierra Madre.

Throughout the mountain sections of the States of Zacetecas, Durango, Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Sonora, his power was so far supreme that he raided camps like Sombreretillio, Ventanas, Guanacevi, looting when and as he pleased.

At the time Hill was climbing out of one of the upper tributaries of the Rio Fuerte, toward the crest of the range, with several mules loaded with rich merchandise and freshly coined silver from the Culiacan mint, accompanied by three helpers.

Suddenly, without the least warning, from the rocks and timber that thickly bordered the trail a storm of lead was poured into his little party. The first volley killed outright his three companions.

Springing to cover behind a tree, Hill fought until he fell, emptying first his Winchester and then his two pistols.

When he regained consciousness it was to find himself in the bandit's camp, high up among the

pines, his wounds rudely but effectively dressed, and himself the subject of the best care circumstances permitted.

Presently his captor, the redoubtable Eraclio Bernal, came to see him. Bernal was a slender wisp of a man, black bearded, with great black, melancholy eyes, looking more befitting an anchorite than a bandit.

"Well, son, coming round, I hope? I've been doing my best to save you, for you earned it. Never heard of such a fight as you put up.

"You killed fifteen and wounded eight of my men — scored with twenty-three of your twenty-four shots. And you did not go down until your last shell was spent, not until four shots had hit you in the face, four passed through your side, and eight others had grazed your skin.

"You fought like a thousand devils! With three leaders like you, I could whip Don Porfirio's army and take the presidency."

Through the many weeks it took Hill to journey back from the borderland of death to health and strength, the bandits were unremitting in their kindly care of him.

And when again able to travel, Bernal started him with a strong escort that safely landed him and his merchandise at his destination.

All of which, I dare say the reader will agree, constitutes a rarely paralleled expression of the admiration of one bold spirit for another.

The three years in the middle eighties that I was employed as treasure guard of the Carlisle

Mine, in New Mexico, were certainly full enough of strife to satisfy the hungriest battler.

It was my duty to escort and guard the bullion shipments on their sixty-five mile overland journey from the mine to Lordsburg, our nearest railway shipping point, and while resting about the camp to maintain order.

Road agents were thick enough and, what was worse, many of the cowboys of the big cattle outfits of southern New Mexico were themselves, like the road agents, outlaw Texans. Among them the road agents could always get food, ammunition, asylum and mounts.

Their dislike of me as a Yankee soon crystallised into bitter hatred when, to strengthen my hand as bullion and camp guard, the mine authorities had me appointed a deputy sheriff of Grant County. For I was thereby empowered to interfere with the mad pranks by which they were always knocking holes in the law whenever they came to town.

For a beginning, I started off with a general jolly, tried to persuade them in a kindly way that we were fond of our local scenery just as it stood, and would be mightily pained to see it much shot and cut up into new patterns we were liable not to like.

But for my comfort and their safety this mild pacification talk proved a bad break. It established generally among them the conviction the new officer was " buffaloed," afraid of them. This was true, in a way, only what they didn't know

was that I'm never so dangerous as when I get good and scared.

Shortly after I took charge, I was advised that one of the Texas outlaws named Bob O'Brien, a fugitive for the killing of a Texas sheriff, had been promising himself to give me a shooting game. But when the next day I met him, to my surprise he tackled me for a job.

I told him I was sorry I had no power to deputise him, as I had heard he was a gun expert and was so little of a fighter myself I should be glad to have his assistance, that I needed the friendship of all the good men in camp and hoped to have his.

Then I bought him as fine a dinner as the camp afforded, and finished by presenting him a box of cigars when we shook hands at parting.

Grateful? Was he? Sure, or at least so it seemed to me. Grateful for what he evidently regarded as assurance that he could run riot and shoot up the town as he pleased, safe of interference from me.

Inside of two hours he was sizzling drunk, shooting up the camp, and yelling for the new sheriff to come out and stop him.

Knowing it was make good then and there or get chased out of the country, I went out quick enough — to find him, like most of his drop-hunting kidney, a feeble four-flusher the moment his hand was called.

While I was quickstepping him to our little brown adobe jug, he managed to get up enough

dander to smash me in the face with his handcuffs. This, however, I rather welcomed, as giving me a chance to collect for the value of the dinner and cigars I had misspent on him, by caressing his face with the barrel of my gun until it looked like a map of the Florida Keys.

The next morning I found I had locked the handcuffs so tightly on him I had to file them off, during which process he diverted himself by telling me, in shockingly bad language, that I would not be on earth to eat another supper.

So, as I always did enjoy my meals and never could stand anxiety about my future, I ordered my black horse (the fastest in the country) to be brought, saddled and bridled.

As soon as the horse arrived I handed O'Brien his pistol and belt, and remarked: "See that the chambers of your gun are full, son, and then cut loose. If you can get me, there's my black horse ready for a safe get-away!"

His face wasn't pretty, naturally, and it was not any handsomer on account of the beating I had given him, but my proposition turned it something hideous — a mixture of hatred and fear — as he buckled on his gun and sneaked out of my presence without a word.

His tale of what had happened to him must have inspired resentment among his mates of the sawmill camp, for the same night word was brought me that Jack Morrison, another Texas "bad man," was in town looking for the man who had "put it over" his partner, O'Brien.

I was not very long getting to Mr. Morrison and attending to his case, and when I was through with him, I am sorry to say his face was in worse condition than O'Brien's, and it was a meander back to camp for him.

Shortly thereafter, I was called up to the mine. When I came back to camp in the morning, I learned that Frank Kneeland had just started back for the sawmill, after having spent the night shooting up the camp and bemoaning my absence.

Spurring my black to his top speed along the sawmill trail, I soon overtook Mr. Kneeland, expressed to him my profound regret that I had not been on hand to accommodate him the night before, and suggested that, while we were short of music, nevertheless there was enough of us for a round dance, and that I would appreciate an invitation from him to open the ball.

Did he draw? No; at least nothing but a sort of shuddering sigh.

"What do you mean, you white-livered bushwhacker?" I bantered. "Is there no fight in you?"

"Reckon not, Mr. Sheriff," he stammered. "I sure don't feel any hurtin' me right now. Reckon it was just the red-eye that stung me warlike last night, and that now she's kinda faded."

"So? Well, then, son," I replied, "suppose you ride back to camp with me and tank up again on war water; it shall not cost you a cent — I'll buy.

"You know I'm the doctor that operated on

your partners, O'Brien and Morrison, and you can count on me to relieve any symptoms like theirs that may be hurting you."

"Say, Mr. Sheriff," he answered with a feeble grin, "the only thing I'm sufferin' from is a mighty powerful attack of heart failure, and if you'd let me mosey on up to the sawmill, I reckon that would get better, *pronto.*"

Utterly disgusted with his type of bluffing piker, I directed him to drop his pistol and belt on the off side of his horse, and to dismount.

Then, riding up beside him and withdrawing a foot from the stirrup, I managed to remove several of Kneeland's teeth with the toe of my boot, much more quickly, if not less painlessly, than the cleverest dentist could have done. I then wheeled my horse and rode leisurely away, confident he lacked the nerve even to shoot at my back.

Brutal? Yes, crudely, rawly brutal, I am bound to admit my treatment of those men was; but the reader will concede I first did my best to manage them by kindness, and only resorted to violence when forced to it.

And that it was precisely what was needed to master the wild, lawless element thereabouts thronging, is reasonably proved by the fact that I held down my job of deputy sheriff and bullion-guard for the mine for two years, and that without further serious trouble until near the end of my service, when I had to take in a big, bad man travelling under the misleading name of Charles Small, and, with two men I had deputised, cap-

tured, near Duncan, the Bass gang that had wrecked and robbed a Santa Fé train at Socorro.

Leaving the Carlisle Mine, for the next two or three years I became a rather more rapidly rolling-stone than usual. I took a whack at the gold fields of northern California; tried my hand at farming near Pomona, where everything I planted seemed to resent it and stubbornly refused to grow; jumped back north to Stockton and had a go at pressing hay — and found it so much harder work than pressing a pistol-trigger that I soon gave it up; then drifted down to Nogales, Arizona, and backed into a job more in my line — that of deputy sheriff.

But within a few months after my appointment the town had become so peaceable and life there grown so hopelessly monotonous, that I resigned and started into Sonora on a prospecting trip.

For me the trip was a loser, not in the least to my disappointment, for I had become used to it, but it produced my mate a stake sufficiently handsome to suit anybody.

In Leadville, some years earlier, I had known him as a sure-thing card-artist, rolling in prosperity, and why he should want to go piking off into the Sierra Madre's with me, prospecting, was only explainable on the theory that some one was camping on his trail he was not anxious to meet.

But I never indulged my curiosity to the extent of asking him any questions on the subject.

Of course, in that wild mountain region there were small prospects of any rich pickings in his gambling line, but one night that we were camped below Bavispe the chance of his life blew in, as it turned out, about the slickest *conducta* I ever saw in the mountains, a string of fat mules loaded, we later learned, with silver dollars and rich merchandise, with a heavy escort of armed men.

And the owner outshone the *conducta.* A middle-aged Mexican hidalgo, he appeared, of the bluest blood, if one might judge from his high and mighty airs and the costume he wore.

His get-up would have made the gaudiest bandit chief of the Sierras look like a peon — jacket and trousers of golden yellow leather so spangled with silver braid and *conchas* that he must have been weighted like a knight in armour; big sombrero so loaded with gold one could have panned it profitably for a week; saddle sporting a horn nearly as big as his sombrero, covered with a gold boss bearing the eagle, rattler and cacti of the Mexican national arms; spurs and bridle-bit of solid silver; machete and pistol handles set with gold.

He sure was a great looker, was that hidalgo, and seemed to suspect as much himself.

To us he paid no more attention than to the raggedest peons, at least not until my mate, catching him standing near, quickly spread a *serape* on the ground, squatted on one end of it, produced a monte deck, dumped his wad before him, and

called for some high-roller to come and tap the bank.

Tap the bank! Why, at the most it would not stack up above a hundred 'dobe dollars, but a blooded call for a tap of a bank is a dare no Mexican with the price can resist.

Whirling at the sound of my mate's challenge, the hidalgo strolled up to the improvised layout, looked disdainfully on the insignificant pile of silver, and scornfully asked:

"Well, son, have you no more? I do not like to play for trifles."

"Sorry, *señor,*" replied my mate, "but I couldn't dig up another two-bit piece, and I reckon I'm regretting the fact about as much as you, for if my roll was larger I'd waste less of my valuable time winning all of yours."

The insolence of the answer worked as well as it had been hoped, for the hidalgo promptly squatted on the other end of the *serape* and challenged, "Come on, then. You are welcome to all if you can win it — and you can depend there is a plenty."

Covering the bank-roll, the deal began.

Of course the hidalgo never had a look-in, except as, now and then, the dealer allowed him a win to make sure of holding his play.

Meantime, across to and round about the dealer flowed a stream of 'dobe dollars until he looked to be afloat on a sea of silver.

Finally, there came an end of the hidalgo's

ready coin; his *costales* were all emptied of their treasure.

This, however, delayed the game no more than temporarily, until, at his commands, the hidalgo's servants had fetched the bales of merchandise that composed his other mule-loads, which, one by one, he staked against their value — and lost as fast as the layouts could be made and the cards drawn.

Did it feeze him? Not in the least. Smiled like a four-time winner, did the don, and ordered brought his horse and pack-mules, their saddles and his arms — and played them off as cheerfully as he had lost his first bet.

Only toward the finish did he reduce his bets to lower units, as if seeking to extend the period of play in desperate hope Dame Fortune might deign to smile on him, all unmindful of the fact, that should have been obvious to even as mad a gambling fiend as he, that the dealer held Dame Fortune a throttled subject of his will.

Stripped of his beasts and equipment, the hidalgo's face fell grave for the first time. For a few minutes he sat silent, as if in study.

Then, politely excusing himself for five minutes, he rose and entered a neighbouring house — to return almost instantly, it seemed, a man externally transformed, scantily clad in the dirty, ragged blanket, the loose cotton trousers, rawhide sandals, and the frayed and greasy sombrero of a peon.

On his arm he bore his magnificent, spangled costume, complete from boots to hat, and on his face he wore the same disdainful smile.

Sure as death itself of its marked victims, the dealer readily conceded whatever value the hidalgo set upon these his last belongings.

Play was resumed, but now reduced to petty larceny terms, the bets so small that it took the dealer more than two hours to win the fourth of the values that, earlier in the contest, fell to him on a single layout, and to leave his victim plucked to the pin-feathers.

Rising quickly, the game thoroughbred remarked:

"Well done, son; you have won my money, all, but I still own my pride. Good night."

And it proved his good-bye as well, for straight away out into the darkness he marched, and we never saw him again.

Of course, that evening's diversion divorced me from my prospecting mate. With winnings that totalled well up in five figures, he was keen to blow himself where the most fun could be bought, not too dangerously near his old Colorado haunts.

The shortest trail to Tucson was good enough for him, and I took it with him.

Then followed for me several more years of drifting, unprofitable as their predecessors. Service on the Tucson police force; ranching near Gila Bend, where I soon starved out; merchandising in butter, eggs and honey at the Harquahala Mines,— where I got touched up by the needy for my profits so systematically that I philosophically concluded I'd worked about long

enough for others, and dropped back into my old line of deputy sheriff, at Florence, Arizona.

At the time, there were five condemned Indian murderers in the jail awaiting hanging, the notorious Apache Kid among the jail-birds, and no less than seventeen so-called "bad men" in town who well deserved the name. So Sheriff Fryer, under sheriff Hinson Thomas and I had enough to do to keep our guns from rusting.

The sheriff made me custodian of the jail; and the good luck that usually followed me as long as I stuck tight to my "profession" soon developed, in an incident that served to establish a measure of respect for me that materially helped my local prestige as a peace officer.

The greatest bully of the town was a man named Pizona, a burly two-hundred-and-forty-pounder, who was reputed to have systematically whipped the town on an average of once a fortnight for a year or more.

When Fryer came into office he resolved to stop him. Thus it happened one morning that a posse, headed by the sheriff, came hustling the redoubtable Pizona up to the jail, the prisoner bleeding like a butchered beef steer and Fryer and most of his posse looking like they had been trying to win a fall off a circular saw.

Turned over to me, I was ushering him, kindly enough, into the inner court of the jail, when Pizona whirled on the sheriff, swearing he would whip him again. At which Fryer drew his pistol.

Springing between them, I claimed him now as

my prisoner, but only to be myself grappled by the ruffian, and down we fell, locked together.

A wild cat in activity and a bull in strength, he was near getting the better of me when I managed to get him by the throat, and, presently, had him choked to docility, I thought.

But just as I was rising off him, the Chiricahua bronco, Apache Kid, handed him a club, through the head of which a spike was driven. In the same instant one of my helpers passed me a club.

To be sure, I wore my pistol; but since I never could get my own consent to fight an enemy with any other weapon than such as he himself wielded, at it we flew.

Round and round we circled, crouching, leaping, dodging, he positively growling, like the beast he was.

For me especially it was take no chances that could be sidestepped, for one crack on the head with his spiked war club would be sure to finish me.

So all my energies were in play to avoid a blow until I could disarm him.

Presently, on a counter of a blow of his that nearly paralysed my right arm, I contrived to break his. Then, before I could recover full self-control, I gave him two cracks on the head that left him fluttering along the crest of the last divide of life for several weeks.

This club duel served to give Fryer's new deputy such a local " rep " that, transferred from the custodianship of the jail to more active service

about the town, a few weeks sufficed to tame, as gentle as house cats, the few " bad " ones that did not promptly hit some trail for other parts.

Drifting from Florence up to Prescott, I there met a clever sleight-of-hand performer who tempted me to try for a stake at a new game; and while I sat in and drew cards with him for more than a year, the same old hoodoo followed me.

From Frisco we took in all the towns as far down the west coast as Guayaquil, giving exhibitions — my mate of his tricks at legerdemain; I of glass ball breaking with my pistol.

Returning from Guayaquil to Panama, thence we coasted down to Buenos Ayres, crossed to Cape Town, and worked up through the Colony and the Transvaal to Johannisburg, leaving there, ultimately, just before the Jamison raid.

Prosper? Did we? Sure; stacked up no end of experience and memory of new scenery — but landed in New York so stony broke that I had to borrow the price of my old friend Mackey to carry me back among the sage brush and cactus I never should have left.

— XVI —

THE CHINOOK WIND

RETURNED from Africa, until late in the nineties I continued active in the Vanguard, ranging the mountains and deserts of the Southwest, as peace officer or bullion guard of this or that mine, as marshal or deputy sheriff of one turbulent camp or another.

And always with the same result. No job ever lasted long with me. I did my work too quickly. Instantly I was on a new job, it was hit myself in the flank with my hat and fly at it on the jump. At the first step toward restraining the crimes and violence of the outlaws and thugs, it was fight them to a conquering finish or be packed to the local "Boot Hill."

And while they often had me scared badly enough to want to run, I can truthfully say I never did. I never quit a camp or trail whose pacification I had undertaken until its bad men were exterminated or driven out. Often I worked alone, sometimes, where the odds against me were too heavy, with a hardy man or two to help.

Round the circle of the camps I swung, to the

Pierce Mine, the King of Arizona Mine, to Prescott, to Williams, Yuma, Tyson's Wells, Morenci — too many to mention. Directly peace descended upon a camp I was employed in, nothing remained for me but to climb out of it, to "beat it" as soon as the battling was done.

Further details of the grim, bloody strife of those closing years of the work of the old Vanguard, I have not stomach to write.

To me they were just in the day's work.

And while I believe, and many who know me intimately tell me, my human sympathies are tender as those of most men, then I thought no more of exterminating a desperado than of bowling over venison I needed to fill out a slack belt.

Now, after some years of peace, I have come to view my old life from a new angle, that of the men and women of to-day; have come to realise the horror of it, no years and, indeed, few months of it unblemished by the shedding of human blood.

And yet I was no more than an honest craftsman of my day.

Our work, the work of me and my kind, was necessary — imperative — the work of the Vanguard that pacified the Old Frontier.

Of my work I am proud; of it suffer no shame.

Never once in my life have I sought a quarrel; never killed except where forced to it; never knowingly wronged any man.

And for our ample absolution it should suffice to point the fact no man can deny, that neither

schools nor churches flourished, nor centres of peaceful husbandry throve, nor mills smoked and steel rails criss-crossed all the land, until the work of the old Vanguard was done!

For myself I expect nothing — ask nothing but a few years more of the infinite happiness and peace that now are mine. But I do appeal to some man whose wealth was founded within the field fertilised with their blood to raise a fitting statue, rugged and stern of face and bold of poise, to The Vanguard, and do respectfully beg that it may bear the inscription:

"*Nor schools nor churches flourished, nor centres of peaceful husbandry were established, nor mills smoked and steel rails criss-crossed all the land, until the work of The Vanguard was done.*"

Some months before the outbreak of the Spanish War I first fell ill.

An iron frame that had known no pain, save such as weapons make, succumbed.

Down I toppled, like an age-worn Michigan pine crumbling beneath its load of snow.

Then they took me home, to the only home the whole world held for me, the Old Soldiers' Home, at Los Angeles, a privilege won by my service in the California Column.

There I had every care such institutions can bestow — all, indeed, but the soothing touch of loving hands my wild life had left me stranger to.

Soon they had me on the mend, sufficiently mended so that when the echoes of Dewey's guns

roused all our land I was able to quit my bed and jump the first train for San Francisco.

Arrived there, I got an interview with General Wesley Merritt, and begged permission to volunteer, in any corps for any active service in the field. But only to be told that I was too old!

Realising my appeal hopeless, I stamped out of his office, madder than I had been since Tom Harper knocked me down in Bessie McVicker's presence.

But on reflection I cannot so much blame the general, for besides my years I was still thin and drawn from my illness, almost feeble, and had counted perhaps too much on my well-known record, and the chance of recruiting my energies on the out voyage, for my acceptance as a volunteer.

Rejected, nothing remained for me to do but make my way back to the Old Soldiers' Home and settle into the routine of idleness that doubtless serves to keep an old carcass longer on its legs, but that soon chafes a man accustomed to a life of action to the serious contemplation of suicide — so affects all, in fact, who do not promptly fall victims of mental dry rot.

There, for some years, it was my destiny to remain, amid an interminable babble of the ills and aches, the regrets and griefs of my fellow inmates that soured the milk, obscured the sun and turned God's flowers dull grey.

Time and again I tried to escape, but my ills were still too strong upon me. Only once were

my services commanded — by the owner of the Double Circle Ranch, who wrote that robbers were thinning his horse herd and looting his equipment, and urged me to come and go them a whirl.

Arrived at the Double Circle, I soon learned that most of the looters were men of his own outfit; and since he immediately put me in charge, and something of my reputation was known, my coming was bitterly resented.

And shortly, on Christmas night it was, the ball opened, in a way that would have soon led to trouble if I had not nipped it in the bud. Fighting drunk and scowling challenge at me, several men out with their guns and began shooting into the floor of the ranch-house. Of course, it was call their hand, *pronto,* so I quietly remarked:

"Boys, put up those guns instantly, or else shoot at me, for the next gun that goes off, no matter how aimed, I shall take as a shot *at* me."

Rather to my surprise, for there were three downright bad ones in the bunch, they obeyed.

Guns restored to scabbards, I told the three they were dismissed from the ranch, right there, and could take their money and start ahoof for the railway in five minutes or fight me, as they pleased.

For a whole minute they looked like war, so much so I felt glad I had taken the precaution to slip a second pistol inside my shirt.

But only for a minute; then they caved, crumpled up and took their money — perhaps because a couple of days before they had been watching

me tossing tomato cans into the air and boring them with my pistol, with fewer misses than looked good to them.

Three months did for the Double Circle. Pacified, there was no further need of my services. My happy little outing was over, and it was trail back to the Home; back, with the scent of life in my nostrils and the thrill of action in my blood, back into the scent of the grave and the asphyxiating atmosphere of the mentally feeble and moribund.

But, happily, the Double Circle incident proved the dawning of the brightest period of my life, a dawning whose shining rays were shortly to lead me into a harbour of peace and joy, of contentment and bliss, that I had never dreamed could be mine.

Down to the home one day came from the redwood lumber camps of north California an old soldier whom I had known as a lad in Ionia County.

Through the war he had served in a Michigan regiment. Only twice since had he revisited our old home, but he had continued correspondence with his family.

From him I learned — oh joy! the greatest that could come to me — not only that Tom Harper had recovered of the wound that had left me for half a century regarding myself as an outlaw, not only that my mischievous Bessie McVicker still lived, but that, through all the weary years of my absence, she had remained single!

Could it be *that?* Could it be that she had withheld her heart and hand through all those years for memory of *me?* No. That were indeed folly of the wildest.

She wait for me? She, who had never passed me so much as a kindly word, who was ever making me the subject of cruel jests! She, above all, who had run to Tom's side and taken his head in her lap when, fallen under my blow, he lay so still in the snow!

Nonsense. Doubtless instead she had forgotten the fact I had ever existed. But I would know; I must know.

Promptly her answer came. Followed a correspondence in which she owned she had loved me from the first; that she well deserved the sousing in the sap-trough I had given her; and that she had only run to Tom in fear my blow had killed him, and in the hope she might revive him and save me the grave consequences that must ensue in case he died at my hands.

But oh! the grief intermingled with our joy!

She remained as poor as I; could no more come to me than I could go to her.

She was shackled by her poverty in the sugar-bush where I had left her, I by mine in the Soldiers' Home.

We were like two disembodied spirits reunited, denied the pressure of dearly loved lips, the clasp of quick-pulsing hands.

But, ah! the pride and happiness our letter in-

tercourse brought me! Bessie had stayed true to me as I to her. And to me it was all the dearer, for that mine had been a silent adoration I had never dared express, and yet so strong she must have sensed it to have responded, as plainly she had, by a lifetime's devotion.

Time passed — much time — until we had become in a way reconciled to our unfortunate lot; had about abandoned hope of again meeting in this world.

Yet once again our lucky star stood still above us.

Back to me came an old friend out of the mists of the past, a mate I had fought beside thirty years before, and who had been lost to me ever since; a mate who knew me and my work and was of a fibre to understand and appreciate it, himself a life-long pathfinder and battler in the wildest parts of three continents.

Back to me, literally, he has not yet come; but my correspondence with him through the last four years has cheered me, has stirred the blood of the old warrior, heartened him, until now again, thank God, no trumpet call of "Boots and Saddles" would find him the last mounted.

Come he has not, but come he will; he must.

For me the last divide is in sight.

Dim and distant reaches its pale line, still distant it seems as I now contemplate it, but too well I know I am driving toward it at racing pace.

God, but I cannot cross it without a handclasp of the man whose sympathy and good cheer

have blown all the dry rot of an old pensioner out of me; set my nostrils aquiver and my blood atingle with the breath of life; given me courage to abandon the galling existence of an indigent inmate of the Old Soldiers' Home; fired me to re-enter the field of free men and to again *do* for myself!

And to *get* for myself what through half a century I had most wanted: my Bessie of the sugar-bush!

For we are married now these four years, she sixty-nine and I seventy-one when we stood up before the parson.

One can work marvels when he tries, and fancy the prize, to me, I was trying for!

Within a year of the day I left the Old Soldiers' Home and its depressing aggregation of aching limbs, bleared eyes, dulled ears, sore hearts, and carping tongues, I had bought an acre of land in one of the outer suburbs of the beautiful city of Los Angeles.

On the land, with these old hands, I built a house.

A house? Rather, to be truthful, should I say a cabin, for it is only twenty-two feet by twelve; but now that it is bowered in vines, banked thick about with flowers, warmed by the dear old California sun, kissed by the soft Pacific breeze, and holds my Bessie, the highest and mightiest of earth are not prouder or happier in their ancestral halls than am I in my cabin.

And when once again I may hold the hand of the man whose return to me was like the coming of the soft Chinook wind after a hard Montana winter, my only supplication will be:

"A little health, a little wealth — and let us round out our lives together in happy stealth, Bessie, my friend and I."

In conclusion, I want to say that while to-day this simple story of my life and work may be lightly read and cast aside, I hold the faith that after another half century has brought the scenes and incidents it describes into longer perspective, it may be valued for the truthful picture I have tried to make it of the experiences of a humble worker in The Vanguard that pacified the Old Frontier.

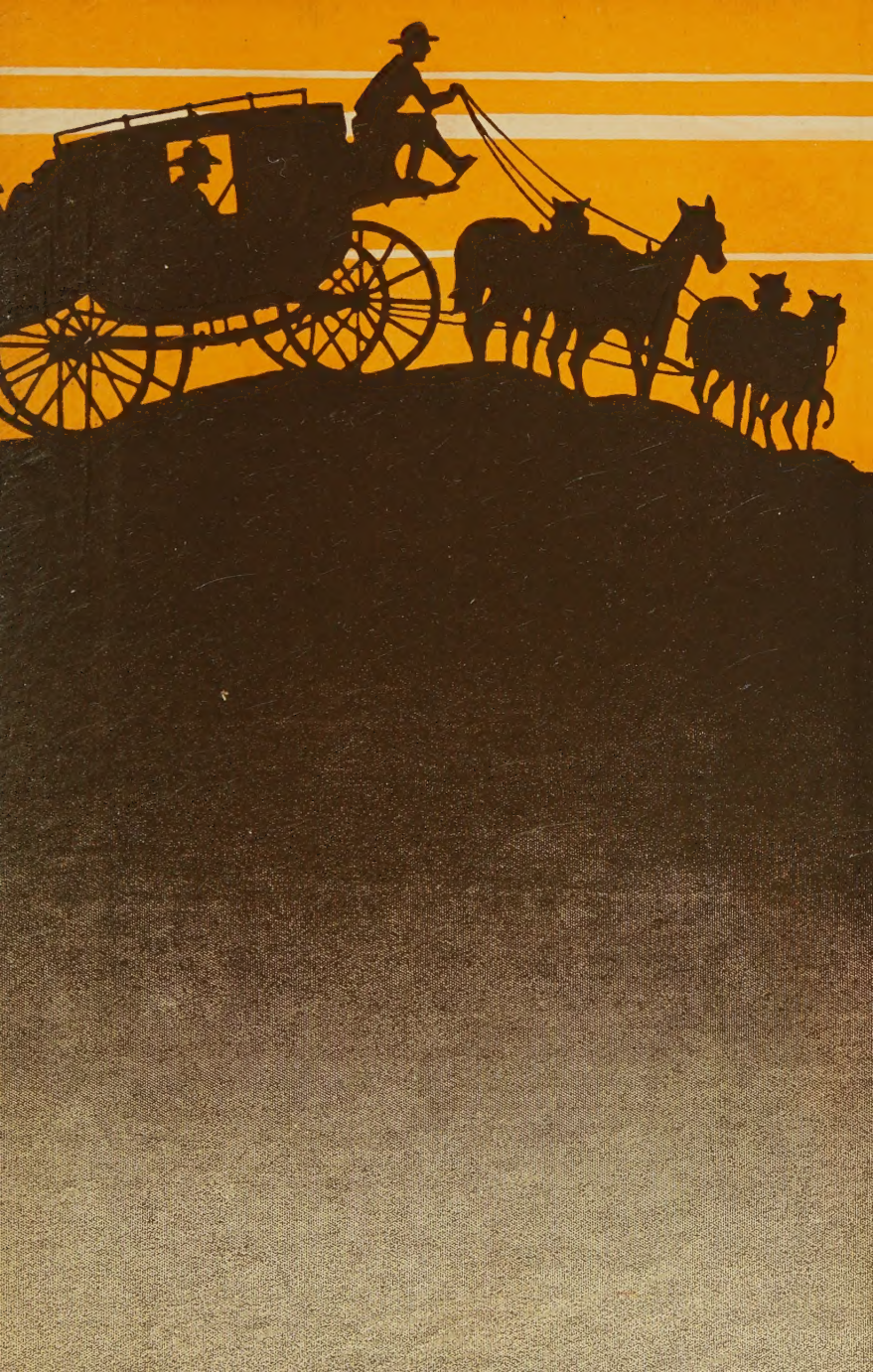
THE END

(Co.

Clark B. Stocking,
6328 Denver Ave.,
Los Angeles, Cal.

President Edmund Seymour,
New York.

My dear Seymour:-

God bless you f
sent to me in this dark hour the
My dear friend, I cannot ex ress
the great plains among savages,
gave me only the knowledge of
describe what my eyes saw and
works of God's land in the wes

MY whole heart and so
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